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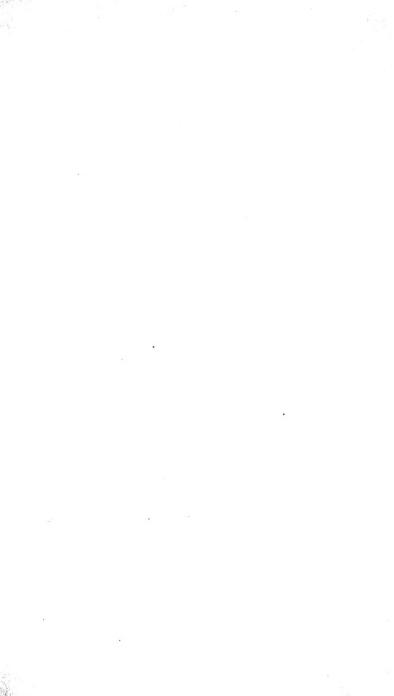
-INCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY

Mrs. Alexander Proudfit.









COMMENTARY,

WITH NOTES,

ON PART OF THE BOOK OF THE

REVELATION OF JOHN.

By the late JOHN SNODGRASS, D. D.

PAISLEY:

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1799



ADVERTISEMENT.

HE following work, the incomplete, and attended with all the disadvantages of a posthumous publication, will be found, it is hoped, not unworthy of attention. It is the fruit of deep thought and laborious research. The learned and pious author, it is well known, had carefully studied the book of the Revelation of John. He had perused and examined with much attention the works of the most eminent commentators upon that interesting portion of holy writ. In a course of lectures delivered during the years 1792-6, he had explained it to his congregation; and the interpretation which he had given of it, there is reason to believe he intended to convey to the public from the prefs. An afflicting diforder, which at last terminated his valuable life, prevented the execution of this delign. Of his manuscript, written originally in short hand, he had been able to transcribe but a part, and that not in perfect connection, or with all the minute attention, either to accuracy or elegance, which he would undoubtedly have given it in perufing it with

with a view to immediate publication. What now appears is a Commentary with Notes upon chapter I. chapters IV, -- XVI. inclusive, and chap. XX. 7-15. together with three Differnations upon very curious subjects, viz. The Four Beasts, the Four and Twenty Elders, and the Number of the Beaft. In the Commentary, which forms the body of the work, the author first endeavours to ascertain the precise import of the several prophetical visions exhibited to the apostle; and then determines, and with great probability, the fucceffive events, in the history of the world, and in the history of the Christian church, in which those mysterious visions received their accomplishment. In the Notes subjoined to each vision he gives a concife, but clear, view of the opinions of the most celebtated commentators respecting the subject which he has discussed, and states his reasons for differing from them. Thus the work, imperfect as it is, will be found interesting and instructive. It is far from being a mere compilation of the fentiments of others; the author was well able to think for himfelf: in many places he will be found original: many of his conjectures are entirely his own; fome of them perhaps are fingular; all of them however will be acknowledged ingenious; and they who do not admit them, may, at least, be instructed by the manner in which they are discussed, perhaps surprised at the evidence with which they are supported.

With all the proofs which this work furnishes of the author's deep thought and great erudition, still to those who were strangers to him, it will convey but a very inadequate idea of his eminent talents; they however who knew him will recognize him in every page; and among the candid and impartial it will be no discredit to his memory. His memory will be long cherished and respected by many; and by those who had access to a more intimate acquaintance with him, who knew his diffinguished powers, his favourite studies, and his habits of close and accurate thinking, these remains will be highly prized as an affecting and instructive memorial of his esteemed friendship and edifying conversation. They will peruse with pleasure the following delineation of his character, which formed the conclusion of a fermon preached in the Middle Church of Paisley on Sabbath the 1st day of July 1797, at the defire of the prefbytery, on occasion of the author's death, by his intimate friend, the Rev. Mr. Balfour of Glafgow. His text was Heb. xiii. 7, 8. "Remember them which have " the rule over you, who have spoken unto you " the word of God: whose faith follow, consi-66 dering the end of their conversation. " Chrift

" Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

"If I have given a true account of the character, duties and objects of the rulers referred to in our text, fuch furely ought to be the character of every public teacher of the religion of Jefus; but, alas! how few attain to it? Highly honoured is that man, who is thus diftinguished by the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost: Happy are the people who have enjoyed the pastoral care of such a shepherd. If fenfible of fuch a mercy, they cannot but mourn when deprived of it—they need, and will receive, the fympathy of all who truly value a gospel ministry .- You of this congregation ought to know its value, for you have enjoyed its highest advantages under one of the ablest ministers of the New Testament. I cannot think that I say. too much, when I apply to your late worthy Paftor every part of the description in our text; for while he had the rule over you, as a fervant of Christ, and the minister of your choice, he maintained that spiritual authority, only by speaking to you the word of God, and exhibiting a faith and conversation becoming the gospel. While the graces and virtues of Christianity adorned his private character, these shone conspicuous in his public office.

"His faith as a Christian did not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. No one was capable of nicer speculations, or could more accurately investigate the truth of the gospel, and weigh every species of evidence with which it was revealed and is transmitted to us, yet he possessed a more divine faith, than could be infpired or supported by mere reason. Highly cultivated as was his understanding, he never was afhamed to refign it to the supreme authority and influence of the truth and Spirit of God for direction and determination in every religious principle, as well as in all moral practice. Indeed he gloried in ascribing, and in teaching others to ascribe, every peculiarity of Christian character, privilege and prospect, to the sovereign felf-moving love of God, the infinitely meritorious righteoufness of the Redeemer, and the effectual influence of the Holy Ghost .-- None who knew him, will fuppose, that this manner of thinking or speaking proceeded from mental weakness, want of information, or wild enthusiasm .-- They must have had very partial knowledge of him indeed, or strong prejudice against him, who do not readily own that his natural powers were great---his fense strong and manly...his genius fertile...his application to every useful study intense and successful--and his knowledge of men and books in every branch of literature uncommonly extensive.---

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These qualifications, added to a chearful, social temper, while they fitted him to be an instructive companion, inclined him to focial intercourse; ... not indeed with every company, however mixed or frivolous, far less with the licentious or profane, but with the friends of reason, religion and virtue. With these he was always happy, and never failed to make them happy. All who were acquainted with his worth, therefore, were covetous of his improving, entertaining conversation. He knew well how to animate it with information---dignify it with argument---folemnize it with feriousness, and enliven it with anecdote....What rendered his company the more agreeable and defired, was his ability to converse with the most learned, and his condescension and easy accommodation of himself to those of very inferior knowledge and capacity.

"But what chiefly deferves our attention is, that while furnished with real erudition, and qualified to make a confiderable figure in the learned world, his highest and unceasing ambition was to grow in and communicate facred, scriptural knowledge.--Indeed he excelled in Biblical learning, and facred criticism---these enabled him often to throw light on dark and difficult passages, and to strike the attentive hearer with ingenious remark and illustration. With critical disquisition however, and a lively

a lively fancy, he always mingled found doctrine, folid practical instruction, and deeply impressive While he fearched the fcriptures daily, to increase his own religious knowledge, he laboured to teach others how to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and to apply them to the advancement of true vital piety, and universal goodness. Considering the scriptures as divinely inspired, and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, he so appealed to them, as to make it evident, that he never wished his opinion or words to be farther regarded than they agreed with the word of God. He was ever anxious that none might receive the gospel from him, or from any other, as the words of man, but as it is in truth the word of the living God. Thus divinely directed, and directing you, all his views in preaching centered in Christ, and the falvation which is in him. To command faith and affection, obedience and submission, he fet forth and recommended the Saviour of finners not only by the highest perfection of human character, but with all the atributes of true and proper divinity; with all the merit and grace of the only appointed and accepted High Priest over the House of God; with all the supreme majesty of the King of Zion; and the almighty grace of the author of eternal falvation.

"As he began, to he uniformly conducted his ministry, by preaching, " not himself, but Christ " Jefus the Lord, and himfelf your fervant for " Jefus' take." This was not only his subject and folemn protestion when he first addressed you from the place where I now stand, but it was the unvarying aim of all his ministrations; and what thould ever endear him to your memory is, that his only defire of life was to refume this grandest and most interesting theme, and with his last powers of health and voice to prefs it upon your hearts in all its importance and influence. Of thefe things you will recollect firlking proofs, not only in all his fer nons, but in his prevailing temper and uniform conduct. Did he not learn of his Divine Master to be meek and lowly in heart and manners? Tho' he was continually adding to his frock of mental endowments, he was not wife in his own conceit, nor puffed up with his fuperior and growing knowledge. So far was he from the prile of oftentation and boafting, that public duty alone brought him into view; and when difcharge I, he was goad to return to the quiet retreat and humble walks of private fludy and domestic li'e. This however was not the unwilling modefly of a feeble, irrefolute, or timid mind. Few men acted with more decision and courage, independence and energy. When any object possessed

real magnitude and importance, of which he was a ready and accurate judge, he shrunk not from the acknowledgement and pursuit of it on account of any difficulty or danger. With equal wisdom, sirmness and zeal he maintained it against all opposition. There can be no doubt that he was fonder of home, and of his study, than of any public appearance. But if it was difficult to draw him forth, when convinced that it was duty, he chearfully obeyed the call, and then appeared with greater advantage and more effect.

"While he yielded to conviction, he detested the suppleness of temporizing compliance. In the cause of truth, especially evangelical truth, he never flinched—he fought the good fight, he kept the faith---warmly attached to the Sterling principles of civil and religious liberty, he abhorred every encroachment upon them, while he was equally a zealous and steady friend of lawful authority and good order. While animated with the purest patriotism, he was not less animated with universal benevolence. His great and good mind wished and fought peace and falvation to them who were afar off, as well as to them who are nigh. The honour and applause-the pleasures and wishes of this world made but a flight impression on his mind. Tho' able to fill any flation in the church, with perfonal credit and public honour, he never fought

fought great things for himself—while others, of much inserior talents, pressed forward to hold the pre-eminence, he delighted in the enjoyment of the shade. He loved the place of his sathers—he was attached to Paisley—he was attached to you of this congregation. To improve his own mind in private, and be useful to you in public, in promoting your best, your eternal interests, seemed to be the height of his ambition here.—But his great Lord sound use for him in a better world—He is entered into his Divine Master's joy—We are left in the Vale of Tears—to lament our loss, pursue our journey, and prepare for a happy eternal reunion in the heavenly mansions.

COMMENTARY

ON THE

REVELATION.

INTRODUCTION.

IN this Work I address myself to those who acknowledge the sacred authority of this mysterious, but very interesting Book, and therefore I shall scarcely take any notice of the evidence of its divine original, farther than what arises from the accomplishment of the prophesies which it contains. This indeed is an evidence of the



most satisfying nature; for it is God alone that can declare the end from the beginning, and shew the things that are to come hereafter. It is an evidence likewise that is still increasing as these predictions are gradually fulfilled; not only by affording additional examples of the difcoveries which have been made by the all-difcerning Spirit of God; but in strengthening the interpretation, by the correfpondence between the connected chain of prophefy, and that of historical facts and events, in a great variety of inflances, and through a long period of time.

Though perhaps none of the apostolic writings were more universally acknowledged than this Book, for more than an hundred years after its publication, it will not appear furprising, to those who

are acquainted with its history, that for fome ages afterwards it should have been but partially received. Reasons abundantly convincing have been affigned for this, by writers upon the fubject. But it is not a little aftonishing, that its authenticity should be called in question by men professing a zeal for the scripture, at this distant period, when the providence of that God, by whom it was inspired, has confirmed and demonstrated it in the strongest manner, in the corresponding history, both of the world and of the church. This fhews an obitinacy of disposition which is very little honourable to those who possess it, because there is no evading the force of this argument, but by fome of the very fame means which infidels have employed to undermine the credit of the ancient prophesies.

Intro-duction.

We have the testimony of the apostle himself, that he received this Revelation while he was banished in the isle of Patmos; and we learn from the testimony of Antiquity, that this was in the perfecution that was raifed against the Christians by the Emperor Domitian. It is therefore, with good reason, that the learned and induffrious Dr. Lardner has fixed the date of this Book to the year of our Lord o6. I know that feveral commentators, and critics of great name*, have firongly contended, that it ought to be carried back to a much earlier period, and that it can fearcely be later than the time of Claudius, or of Nero. Those who understand this Book, chiefly

^{*} Grotius, Hammond, Lightfoot, Sir Haac Newton, Bifhop Newton, &c.

chiefly as a prophefy of the de- Introstruction of Jerusalem, and the fufferings of the Jews, are obliged, in point of confiftency, to feek for this early date. But it is rather a fuspicious circumstance, when, in order to accommodate its date to a particular scheme of interpretation, we find the clearest testimony of Antiquity (a) rejected, and, in opposition to it, the whole evidence rested on a vague and inconfiftent affertion of a writer of acknowledged inaccuracy (b). This question

- (a) This testimony is given us by Irenæus, to whom the current opinion of the fecond century must have been well known; and as he was in his early years a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John, he could fearcely be mistaken about the matter of fact, having probably learned it from that venerable martyr, who delighted much in telling anecdotes concerning him.
- (b) Epiphanius, who lived at the end of the fourth century.

question however has been difcussed in a manner so sull and fatisfactory, that it is sufficient to refer at the foot of the page to the writers by whom it has been treated (c).

I shall

(a) See Lardner, Mill, Wolfii Curæ philol. vol. Vth, and Vitringa upon the Apocalypfe. The laft of these learned writers sets the inconsistency of Epiphanius in fo firong a light, that I cannot forbear quoting the passage in his own words. Epipha-· nius, in Alogorum haereñ exponenda et refellene da, bis memenit exilii Joannis in Patmo fub Clau. dio; fed ita, ut ipfe fui erroris manifestum suerit condicium. Prior locus in hunc modum legitur: as Ob id deinde Sp. S. Joannem, invitum licet, ac « religione quadam ac animi moderatione defugien-" tem- ad feribendum evangelium impulit; affecta " jam actate, utpote qui jam nonagelimum annum actatis excederet, postquam ex Patmo infula re-" versus effet; quod quidam Claudio imperante " contigit." Postquam vero, sub sinem hujus disdisputationis, ubi directe de Apocalypsi agit, sic habit: "Qui cum olim, imperante Claudio Cac-" fare, vatecinium illud ediderit, cum in Patmo incc fula

I shall therefore only consider Introan objection which has been much infifted upon of late against the common opinion. It is this, "That the stile of the Apocalypse is fo full of Hebraisms and barbarifms, as evinces that the author was but lately come out of Judea, was little accustomed to write in Greek, and had not yet attained

to

" fula verfaretur, &c." Quid? An Joannes, quem constat vitam produxisse usque ad Trajani tempora, fub Claudio jam fuerit fenex nonagenarius? Qui, quo tempore Dominus ex mortuis fuerit fuscitatus, aetate adhuc fuit juvenili et vegeta, ut quis ex ip-6 fius evangelio facili colligat. An fi a Claudio in · Patmum insulam fuerit relegatus, quod volunt viri docti, etsi exerte non scribit Epiphanius, sub eodem Claudio ex exilio rediit in Afiam? An ' haec fibi constant, vel probabilia videntur? Quare ' omnino mihi perfuadebam, in menda cubare pri-' orem Epiphanii locum de Claudio, antequam 6 hunc posteriorem cum eo contulissem. Nunc vero 6 nihil mihi fuperest nisi ut id vitio vertam ipsius im-

' prudentiae aut festinationis,"

to that greater purity of stile which appears in his Gospels and Fpistles." This is held forth as an unanswerable argument, and it must be confessed that it is very specious. But when it is opposed to clear and satisfying testimony, like other arguments, which have been so employed, it will be found to be of unequal weight.

That the stile of the Apocalypse runs more into the Hebrew idiom, than that of the other writings of the Apostle, is not to be denied: but this is to be accounted for upon a very disserent principle from that of its early publication. The apostle had, for a considerable time, been in a great measure excluded from human society. This circumstance alone will account for his native idiom returning more strongly upon him. But it is probable, that

in his folitary exile he would be much employed in reading the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah and his kingdom, and in recollecting the many wonderful things which he had heard from his bleffed mouth; and that he would be much employed likewise in acts of devotion, all which would be conceived in his native language. This would increase the effect in a very confiderable degree. But, above all, it must be observed, that there he was chiefly engaged in converfing with his divine Lord, with angelic beings, and with the spirits of just men made perfect; that there he feems to have been caught up into the heavenly fanduary, and to have been prefent at its elevated worship, which was represented as carried on after the manner, and confequently in the language of the temple fervice; and that he be-

held many wonderful visions, where Jewish scenes, and objects, and customs, were almost constantly before him. It is not to be doubted then, that the language of these visionary fcenes must have been Jewish likewife, and that all the explanations which he received respecting them, must have been communicated in that language. This would bring the mind of the apostle as completely under the influence of the terms and idioms of his native language, as the first moment after he came out of Palestine. And when it is added, that through a great part of this book he was only performing the office of a translator, and that too upon a fubject of prophecy, where no latitude of phrase could be permitted, but the very mode of expression must be strictly retained, I conceive it will fully account for all those Hebraisms, and even barbarisms,

barifms, as they have been called, by which this book is fo remarkably diffinguished, even from the earlier writings of this apostle.

Introduction.

Let us beware however of imagining that the language of this Book, to which the feverity of criticism has been so liberally applied, is calculated either to disfigure, or to difgrace the truths which it contains. On the contrary, by imbibing the spirit of an ancient language, diftinguished alike for its simplicity and its vigour, it is perhaps the more accommodated to the importance and elevation of the fubject upon which it is employed; and by the air of antiquity which it has thus acquired, it preferves to prophecy its folemn, and its venerable aspect. I only add, that in the judgement even of the learned Bengelius himfelf, notwithstanding its want of elegance and polish, it becomes

comes pleafant, by custom, and has a dignity belonging to it that is fuited to the court of heaven (a).

We fee then that the grand argument, for the early publication of this book, falls entirely to the ground, and that (b) there is no fufficient

- (a) "Hebraifmus," fays he in his Adprratus criticus, "regnat libro, prima fpecie infolens et afper, fed revera cum adfueveris, non folum tolerabilis, fed etiam dulcis, ac plane cœleftis ftilo curiæ dignus."
- (b) I have omitted the authority of fo late and fo obscure a writer as Aretas for the early publication of this book, as unworthy of notice. I have likewise passed over the story which is told by Clemens Alexandrinus, respecting a young man, whom John, after his return from Patmos, committed to a certain bishop, and whom, when he had afterwards become the leader of a band of thieves, he pursued, riding and running after him, with a kind of youthful vigour, as too vague and uncertain to found any argument upon it. It is told by a person who lived at a great distance, and had little opportunity of examining into the truth. It is a story

ficient reason for departing from the date which we have already affigned it. The apostle had committed it to writing in the time of his banishment in the isle of Patmos, but it probably could not be published till his release; and it is evident, that the whole sirst chapter is only a fort of proem or introduction, which the apostle drew up after he had left the island, and when he was about to fend it abroad among the Asiatic churches.

Introduction.

This

ftory almost without a name. Neither the young man himself seems to have been known, nor the bishop to whom he was committed, nor the city in which he lived. The only circumstance that is taken notice of, is that which is least likely to have been remembered, the circumstance of the time in which it happened. The story likewise bears strong marks of exaggeration upon it, and therefore it is not improbable that it might at length be fixed to an advanced period of the apostle's life, in order to render it the more marvellous.

This preliminary part, even in point of taste, and propriety of composition, might stand the test of the nicest criticism. By the simplicity of the narration the fense is obvious at once. By the affectionateness of the address, the heart is touched and engaged. By the character and circumstances of the writer, a venerable apostle and father, just emerged from fussering, bearing his Mafler's meffage, which he had received in his fequestered folitude, the mind is composed into the most devout attention: and by the flriking fcene which he begins to open, the imagination itself is awakened, our spiritual curiosity, if I may fo express myself, is roused, and we are put into a proper posture and frame for contemplating all the interesting wonders that are afterwards to be disclosed.

DISSER-

DISSERTATION I.

ON THE FOUR BEASTS,

Described Rev. iv. 6, 7, 8.

- 6. ——And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts, full of eyes before and behind.
- 7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a slying eagle.
- 8. And the four beafts had each of them fix wings about him, and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

THIS group of figures forms one of the most difficult of symbolical representations. We know so little of the apparatus that belongs



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to the throne and majefly of God, that we must feel ourselves particularly at a lofs in attempting to decypher a fet of emblems fo fublimely mysterious. The impropriety of our translation, in calling them "Beails," has been often obferved; yet it is difficult to fubilitute another appellation in its room, which shall not be liable to exception. When we reflect that the Hebrew noun and, which Ezekiel uses in a fimilar vision, as John does ζωον in this, is properly applied only to living fubstances of the brute creation, the expressions, " Animate beings, Living creatures," and fuch like, which have been confidered as improved translations, will be found far too general and indefinite. Indeed it is abundantly evident, that it was fonce kind of animal forms which both the prophet and the apostle

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postle meant to express by the terms they have made use of; and these they describe with as great clearness of language as the subject will admit of. At the fame time it is to be observed, that they were no real fubstances which they beheld, but only emblematical figures, shadowing forth fome kind of intelligences, under animal appearances and forms. But the great question upon this vision of the apostle is, what those intelligences are which are thus reprefented? In answer to this question I observe, that, for various reasons, they cannot be underitood of Christian churches towards the four corners of the world, reprefented, as the venerable Mede fuppofes, by four animals, in allufion to the figures upon the standards of the four camps of the Ifraelites, around the tabernacle in C

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I.

the wilderness. For, first, these intelligences, whatever they reprefent, performed fuch offices as the church cannot do. They called the attention of John to the events which were to take place at the opening of four of the feals; and one of them gave to the feven angels the feven vials full of the wrath of God: and (chap. xiv.) they are reprefented as diffinct from the true church, which is introduced finging a new fong before them. With respect to the allusion which is here supposed, there is no sufficient reafon to believe that there were any fuch figures upon the standards of the Ifraelites. The opinion has no better foundation than a bare Jewish tradition, without the smallest intimation in scripture to support

it.

it (a). And it is by no means probable, that the Jews, confidering their natural proneness to idolatry, should have been permitted to have such a strong incitement to it, as the figures of animals upon the standards, after which they were to march in their journey through the wilderness. If this had been the case, they might with more propriety have said of them, than of the golden calf, "These be thy "Gods, O Israel, which brought "thee up out of the land of Egypt."

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⁽a) It is true that Mede understands for Pfal. lxviii. 10. as referring to those figures, and renders it, after Jerom, "Animalia tua." But it feems to be used there in a sense somewhat uncommon, to denote what sustains life; as it does Isa. lvii. 10. and Bp. Lowth translates the verse "(as for) thy victual, i. e. the food which thou "gavest them, they dwelt in (the midst) of it." See Exod. xvi. 13—15. Num. xi. 31, 32. See also Parkhurst's Lexicon 777.

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It is likewife to be observed, that, upon this principle, the vision does not give us a just representation of the fact; for it makes the congregation nearer to the throne than the elders or priefts; whereas, in the wildernefs, these last were nearest the tabernacle, and the congregation was encamped around them (a).

Ionly

(a) Mede endeavours to make the vision and the fact to agree by a most arbitrary interpretation: He understands the words, so perow TOU Person xas RUZAW TOU PEONOU, to fignify, in the middle of the fides of a quadrangle, on the outfide of the elders, having a common center with the throne, which he supposes to be quadrangular likewife. But this interpretation is too artificial and ftrained for the ingenious author ever to have propofed, had it not been necessary to the scheme he had adopted. Do not the words, sv psow rev begons zas : 022.00 700 Cyrro, much more naturally denote the near space about the throne (which probably was of a transparent nature) fo near indeed, that to the eye of the apostle, at a distance, some of the figures

I only add one other circumstance, Differt. which overturns the whole scheme of interpretation founded on this opinion, which is, that the order in which the beafts are enumerated in the vision, does not agree with their fuppofed order upon the standards of Israel. In the vision, the calf is the fecond, and the man the third; but in the account of the encampment, Numb. ii. the calf, fupposed to be Ephraim's standard, is the third, and the man, fupposed to be Reuben's, is the second. This, therefore, must occasion an unavoidable mistake, in looking for the accomplishment of the first four feals, as Mede and his followers do, from those respective quarters, where the figures were supposed anciently to be stationed.

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figures would appear as within the throne, while others were standing around it?

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For feveral of the reasons already mentioned, the fimilar curious interpretation which Dr. Wall proposes must likewise be rejected. He conceives these beasls to be four churches, keeping up the conflant use of prayer and praise, (they and the four and twenty elders belonging to them), or rather the Christian church in four feveral ages. First, the primitive church, like a lion, with the flrength of faith and patience. The fecond, like an ox, labouring under hardship and persecutions, and incumbrances of heretics, till the time of Constantine. The third, under the Christian emperors, had a face like a man. The fourth, the church in the time of the apostacy; it is represented, ch. xii. 14. as having two wings of a great eagle, to fly into the wilderness; and here, the representation

is of an eagle flying. He further observes, that ch. v. 9 shews plainly, that both they and the four and twenty elders must have been Christians, and out of feveral nations; and, ver. 14. they faid Amen to the prayers and praises of the angels, and of all earthly and heavenly creatures. And as the voice of one of these animals was like thunder, chap. vi. 1. he quotes St. Jerom, faying, that the Amen of a large congregation of Christians used to be fo in his time. This interpretation, it must be allowed, is ingeniously fancied. But a question occurs, not very confistent with it; namely, why was not the period after the apostacy represented likewise by another animal; for if this were the meaning of the vision, it is fcarcely to be thought, that fuch a glorious state of the church would

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be entirely neglected; not to mention that it would be much more properly reprefented, as having a face like a man, than that under Conflantine. But, it appears from the reasons already assigned, refpecting the offices of these emblematical figures, that they cannot be understood of Christian churches in any fituation or in any period. I fhall have occasion afterwards to thew, that their being thought to join with the elders in finging the fong of the redeemed, is indeed a mifapprehension, and with respect to the amen which this curious annotator takes notice of, it certainly was not that expression which the first beast uttered, when his voice was like thunder, but a very folemn call of attention, which no Christian congregation could be fupposed to deliver.

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Diflert.

The fame reasons conclude as strongly against these beasts being emblematical of the excellent and zealous ministers of the gospel, which seems to be a favourite and prevailing opinion among expositors.

But the most extraordinary interpretation of these mysterious sigures is that of the learned and entertaining Parkhurst, who understands them to be cherubic animals, emblematical of the ever bleffed Trinity, in covenant to redeem man, by uniting the human nature to the fecond Person. This interpretation he has drawn up in a very ingenious and plaufible form, and has endeavoured to support it by a variety of passages, both in the Old and New Testament scriptures. One infuperable objection, as may be thought, he feems to get over with the greatest ease; I mean that which

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arifes from the beafts repeating that folemn adoration, Holy, boly, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come: and likewife falling down before the Lamb, and worshipping God who fat upon the throne. His answer to the first part of this objection, he thinks is as fatisfactory as it is fhort; namely, that the emblems are reprefented as confefling to the realities, and proclaiming the glory of that Holy, boly, boly Lord, three perfons and one Jehovah, in the knowledge of whose power, unity, perfonality, and union with man, they were intended in the most striking and convincing manner to instruct mankind. But how is it possible they could have this intention, when, in order to understand them, we must first be acquainted with a very obfcure and fanciful philosophy, the very principles ciples of which are far removed Differt. from the ordinary course of human investigation. Were mankind indeed as much verfant, as our learned and ingenious author, in what he calls the material trinity of nature; the fluid of the heavens, confifting of the fire at the orb of the fun, reprefenting the Father; the light iffuing from it, denoting the Word; and the gross air, conflantly fupporting and concurring to the actions and effects of the other two, representing the Holy Ghoft:—had they faculties to perceive as clearly as he, that the ox or bull, on account of his horns, the curling hair on his forchead, and his unrelenting fury when provoked, is a very proper emblem of fire; that the lion, from his usual tawny, gold-like colour, his flowing mane, his flining eyes, and

Differt. I. and his prodigious ftrength, is a proper emblem of light; and likewife the eagle, of the spirit, or air in action, from his being chief among fowls, from his impetuous motion, and from his towering and furprifing flights in the air-were they as fully perfuaded as he, of of the folidity and justness of these strangely fancied emblems, then there might be fome ground for imagining that they were intended to instruct mankind, in the most ftriking and convincing manner, in the important doctrines which have been mentioned, as well as in the doctrine of man taken into the cffence, by the union of the faces of the lion and the man. But as thefe are attainments which, it is to be feared, very few can boast of, it is certainly not to be credited, that when God meant to instruct mankind

kind, in the most striking and convincing manner, in fome of the most precious truths which revelation contains, he should speak to them in a language which fcarcely any could understand. With respect to the cherubic animals falling down before the Lamb, and worshipping God who fat upon the throne, he thinks that nothing more was meant by this, than either a cession of the administration of all divine power to Christ, God-man; or a declaration of the divine perfons by their hieroglyphical reprefentatives, that he must reign till his enemies are made his footflool. This he grounds upon prostration being the usual symbolical act, as it still is in the east, not only of divine worship, but of acknowledging the regal power to be in the person so worshipped. But the

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fame observation will apply to this answer as to the former. For how improbable is it, that a doctrine of such vast moment as that of our Lord's supreme and universal dominion, which is taught so clearly in other parts of scripture, should, under the notion of additional information, be intimated in this latest book of the sacred canon in so obscure a manner, that not one of a thousand can apprehend the meaning.

We have therefore ample reafon to conclude, that these mysterious figures are not emblematical of the ever blessed Trinity, in covenant to redeem man by the union of the human nature to the second Person; and we have seen that they cannot denote Christian churches in the different corners of the world, or in different periods of time; nor can they

they denote the excellent and zeal- Differt, ous ministers of the gospel. They must however be understood of created intelligences, but intelligences probably of the most exalted kind. Of this, their nearness to the throne of God is a high indication. Ezekiel's visionary forms feem to have been appendages of the throne which was then in motion. Therefore they moved as it moved, and flood when it flood. But here the throne is at reft, and they are flationed in the circle, or fpace, immediately around it. With respect to superior created intelligences, they feem all to be comprifed under the general appellation of angels. But we know not what gradations of being this appellation may contain. Angels do not, like men, fpring from one common and original flock; a circumstance

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cumstance which necessarily bounds and narrows the distinctions among the race, fo that a general fameness of intellectual character must pervade the whole. Their faculties are probably much more diversified; and we have reason to think, that there are gradations among them of a very elevated range. Nay, it is not unlikely, that there may be fome individuals among them as far superior to the rest, as these are to the human species; and as angelic fpirits are conflantly exhibited in scripture as the attendants upon the Divine Majesty, and as the minifters of the heavenly court, it may naturally be fupposed, that those individuals who are of the most exalted character, would occupy fuch a flation as that which is here assigned to these animal appearances, and forms, and therefore

they may well be understood, I will not fay, to be represented by them, for a reason which will afterwards occur, but to be concealed under them. Diftert.
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But indeed it is not of fo great importance to inquire minutely into the character of these intelligences, or whether there are only four of this high and fupereminent character, as to discover the purpose for which they are introduced. I am inclined to think, that they act here entirely in an official capacity; and that they are introduced, in allusion to the pomp and magnificence of the oriental courts, to perform fuch offices as are calculated to strike the minds of the fpectators with folemnity and awe. To this every thing that is faid respecting them exactly agrees. Their acts of worship are all fuch Differt.
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as indicate an official character. They are few in number: they are little varied; and they are performed in fuch circumftances as heighten the grandeur and folemnity of the fcene. Their divine eulogium, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come, which they are represented as incessantly repeating, cannot be so naturally understood in any other fense as that of a public and solemn proclamation, fitted to roufe and to maintain the deepest veneration in all who hear it. In the fame official character they feem to be represented, sometimes beginning the high celestial anthems, and giving glory, and bonour, and thanks to Him that fat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever; fometimes again, concluding with a loud and

and solemn Amen. Andthis is the sub- Differt. flance of all that is recorded respecting their acts of worship. The other offices which they performed, mark the fame distinctive and public character. Each of them, in his turn, announced the fcenes which were difplayed at the opening of the first four feals, not to John only, but likewife, as appears from the whole strain of the description, to all the heavenly inhabitants, angels as well as men, and called their attention to behold them. And when the vengeance of God was to be completely executed upon the enemies of his church and people, one of them was the miniftering fpirit, who folemnly delivered the vials of the fierceness of his wrath into the hands of the angels who were commissioned to pour them out. These intelligences then appear

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appear evidently to be exhibited in an official capacity, and to be diftinguished as the immediate ministers about the throne and majefly of Jenovan. That they possess extensive and elevated capacities, might well be prefumed from the dignified flation which they held. But their penetrating and comprehenfive knowledge is intimated by their being full of eyes before and behind, and likewife from within, probably in the parts that were covered with their wings; fo that, to use a scripture expression, "their " whole bodies were full of light."

But it remains to be inquired, why they are exhibited under these animal appearances and forms, one like a lion, another like a calf, a third like a man, and a fourth like a slying eagle. These must certainly be of mystical import, and it is

not an easy matter distinctly to de- Differt. cypher them. In vain shall we attempt it by expounding them of the supposed qualities of these intelligences themselves. They seem rather to be emblematical of the conduct of Providence, respecting both the people of God, and his enemies. In this view, how admirably are the vigour and energy of its dispensations shadowed forth by the overpowering strength of the lion! Whatever he shall choose to protect, or defend, must be in abfolute fafety; and, on the other hand, whatever is the object of his vengeance must be unavoidably deflroyed. The generofity, indeed, of that animal to the fubmissive 2, feems a kind of exception. this

Nobilis est ira leonis. Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.



this marks another very comfortablepartof the divine providence; that when men are duly affected with their guilt, in the midfl of wrath God remembers mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. How happily again does the ox denote the long-fuffering patience of God in his conduct towards the wicked; while, at the fame time, the flow, but constant, progressive motion of that animal awfully intimates, that judgement, though it may feem to linger, shall at length infallibly reach the impenitent. In the human character we behold the features of justice, and mercy, and truth, all combined; and how fignificantly does this inform us, that the conduct of Providence proceeds upon those great principles; and that, while God vifits the wicked with his righteous judgements,

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he compassionates the sufferings of Differt. his faints; he regards them with the tenderest care, and will at length deliver them out of all their troubles. Finally, when the judgements of God are to be fpeedily and awfully executed, what can more strikingly denote this than the rapidity of the eagle, darting down upon his prey, and instantly tearing it to pieces! Accordingly it is remarkable, that the fourth beaft is that of an eagle flying; an attitude in which he feldom or never appears but when he is in quest of the wretched victims of his rapacity. Here then we have a fet of figures of the most fignificant and instructive kind. They appear to be appendages of the throne and majefly of God; to intimate, by ftriking emblems, what the fcripture has repeatedly declared, that justice

Differt. I. "justice and judgement are the habitation of his throne," and that "mercy and truth go before his face." And they are exhibited with fingular propriety in a vision which stands connected with the evolution of a long feries of prophetical events, in which power, and judgment, and mercy, and truth, are eminently and affectingly displayed.

The only objection of confequence against this interpretation is that which has been already alluded to; namely, that these intelligences must be understood of Christians, because they are represented, along with the four and twenty elders, as falling down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, and saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seven seals thereof,

shereof, for thou wast slain, and hast re- Differe. deemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation *. But this objection has been long ago fo fully answered, that I have only to observe, with several judicious and learned interpreters, that if the above passage be strictly examined, it will appear that the words, having every one of them amay properly be refricted to the elders, the more immediate antecedent, with which they fully agree. and therefore that the words, Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, may be understood to be the words of the elders alone, and not of the four beafts, who are only represented as falling down in humble adoration before the Lamb, and ratifying all that was faid by the elders, F and

^{*} Rev. v. 8, 9.

^{*} ε χοιτες έκαστος,

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and afterwards by the angels about the throne, and all heavenly and earthly creatures, by fubjoining their amen. Similar passages of scripture confirm this interpretation, in which the beginning of a fentence expresses different objects, while only fome of them are referred to in the conclusion. Of this, Jeremiah xxi. 7. fhall fuffice at prefent for an example, where God declares by that prophet, that he would deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his fervants, and the people, and fuch as were left in the city—into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and that he should smite them with the edge of the fword. But we know, from Jer. xxxiv. 4. that this last expression does not refer to Zedekiah, for he was not to die by the fword, but to die in peace.

DISSERTATION II.

ON THE FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS.

Rev. iv. 4.

And round about the throne were four and twenty feats, and upon the feats I faw four and twenty elders fitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

It has been matter of much inquiry, what we are to understand by these four and twenty elders that were seated about the throne, each on a seat, or little throne, apart by himself. The question is still involved in obscurity. An attempt, therefore, to set this point in a clear and satisfying light, it is hoped,

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hoped, may not be unacceptable. To give a detail of the various opinions of expositors respecting it would be tedious, and, in fome instances, uninteresting. Particularly, were we to display such fanciful opinions as this, That they are the four and twenty books of the Old Testament (though these books are precifely double that number) fitting as wife fenators, and confulting in God's caufe. It is curious, however, how fome of the most judicious expositors have reverfed each other's fentiments upon this and the foregoing point. Mede understands the four and twenty elders to denote the minifters, or rather the bishops and rulers of the church, and the four beafts to be the body of Christians; in which interpretation he feems to be followed by Sir Isaac Newton, and Bifhop

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Bishop Newton; while Durham, Vitringa, Jurieu, and others, take quite the opposite side, and conceive the four beafts to represent Christian ministers, and the four and twenty elders the Christian people. Yet these, contradictory as they are to one another, are the most plaufible interpretations of the emblematical meaning of the four and twenty elders which have hitherto been proposed. But the feveral parts of the description will not agree to either of these interpretations. How very improperly is the church on earth supposed to be figured by elders, when it confifts in a great measure of babes in Chrift, as well as those who are of full age, and exercises no authority but by its rulers! By this interpretarion all our ideas of the just applications of imagery are confoundDiffert. II. ed and loft. It is true, indeed, that Christians are represented in scripture as a royal priesthood. But this is in quite a different sense, intimating, that they are admitted to near access to God, and raised to an exalted dignity, in virtue of their union to Christ: and to put it beyond a doubt that thefe emblematical perfons cannot denote the body of Christians either in heaven, or upon earth, we find that great body, in the following chapter, introduced, not only after the elders. but after the angels also, under the description of every creature in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, and in the fea, offering their tribute of adoration and praise to him that fitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. Befides, upon either of these interpretations, what fatisfying account can be given of the

the number twenty-four, of which the elders consist? Where is the Christian church, or where are Christian ministers, either in this prophecy, or in any other part of fcripture, represented by such a number? The supposition that it alludes to the twelve patriarchs, and twelve apostles, does not accord with either interpretation: and the more ingenious conjecture of Mede, that it alludes to the Priests and Levites in the encampment of the Israelites in the wilderness, who were afterwards divided into twenty-four courses, stands at variance with the fact in fome important circumstances. For,

first, as Markeus justly observes, these Priests and Levites were not seated on thrones. It is further to be remarked, that if these are the persons who are here referred to, Differt.
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they must be understood to be exhibited in their facerdotal robes, which they never appeared in all at once, but only by turns, and when they were performing the duties of their facred office. Befides, if this were the model from which the description is taken, as the elders feem to perform the office of fingers, as well as of priefts, their number should have been forty-eight at least; nay, if the the Levites are to be included. no less than feventy-two; for there were twenty-four courses of fingers appointed by David, fuitable to the twenty-four courses of PrieAs and twenty-four of Levites. We must therefore relinquish these interpretations as inconfishent with just imagery, discordant with fact, and therefore, in all probability, unillustrative of the objects which

the spirit of prophecy had here in Dislert. view.

It is of much importance to obferve, that the figures in these vifions have not only an emblematical, but likewife a prophetical meaning. We have feen this already, in the prospects of providence which the four beafts exhibit, and therefore it is not unnatural to suppose, that something prophetical may likewise be intended by the four and twenty elders. It will readily be allowed, that if there had been only twelve elders, inflead of four and twenty, they would have been understood of the twelve aposles, and of them alone: and I confess I am inclined to think that, by keeping them in our eye, we may flill arrive at the true interpretation. To them every part of the description agrees, Differt. II.

the number alone excepted; and this, I conceive, is to be accounted for from some events which are predicted in the course of these prophecies, and which those facred perfonages, who are here introduced, were probably intended to reprefent. It is a melancholy truth, that the primitive church which was formed by the apostles, after having triumphed over the pride of Paganism, fell into obscurity, and was gradually diminished, till at length it feems to have been loft, the two witnesses, who had prophefied fo long in fackcloth, being flain. This, however, was only like the feed which dies before it is reproduced. The church was to revive; and, in her fecond appearance, was to attain a far greater extent and lustre than in her first. This was to be accomplished under

the influence of the apostolic doctrine, and the exertions of apostolic men, whom God was to raife up and qualify for the arduous enterprise, by pouring out his Spirit upon them in an extraordinary measure. With what eafy fimplicity then, was this glorious event, the future renovation of the church, represented, by adding these second apostles, if I may fo denominate them, unto the first, and in the anticipating stile of prophecy, exhibiting them both together in the character of four and twenty elders, fitting in triumph around the throne. Only admit this interpretation for a moment, and observe, how exactly it accords with every circumstance which is related concerning them. The very name Elder is a title of office, an appellation of high respect; and, as we learn from scripture, not unworthy even of an apostle. The per-

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fons thus represented, had early discoveries of what was afterwards to be more fully revealed, as holy and inspired men might be supposed to have; and therefore one of them was able to comfort John, who appeared there only in the character of a spectator, though not an uninterested one, by informing him, that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed to open the book, and to loofe the feven feals thereof. The white robes, in which they were clothed, denote their high acceptance with God, both in their character, and in their fervice. The crowns of gold upon their heads, and the thrones upon which they are feated, denote their dignity, and victory, and triumph. And by the harps, and golden vials in their hands, they are elegantly represented leading on the prayers and

and the praises of a people yet unborn, who were to be called and fanctified unto the Lord. As fpecimen of that animated fervice, they offer a high afcription of praise and adoration to the Lamb for his redeeming grace, and for the exalted honour to which they were raifed, in being made kings and priests unto God, in the profpect of that glorious period when, in the triumphs of religion, they fhould reign upon the earth. Accordingly, it is not a little remarkable, that the only occasions upon which we find them introduced, are those which have respect to that elevated flate of the church on earth. chap. xix. 4. They are introduced, at the destruction of Babylon, upon the near approach of the latter day glory, falling down and worshipping God, who sat upon the throne, say-

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ing, in addition to the praises of the faints, Amen: Hallelujab. Likewise, at the found of the feventh trumpet, when there were great voices in heaven, faying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders, who fat before God on their feats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, faying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty! who art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned. And when the great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, flood before the throne, and before the Lamb, finging their fong of thankfgiving and triumph, one of the elders flews plainly how deeply he was interested in their happiness, by exciting the attentive curiofity curiofity of John, that he might describe them to him.

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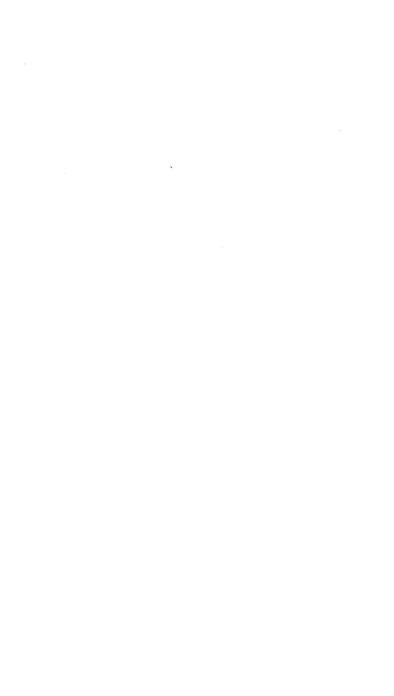
These circumstances lead us plainly to perceive to what great objects the attention of the elders was particularly turned; that they were the future triumphs of the church to which they were to minister. It is not necessary to determine whether there shall be precifely twelve persons who shall be the leading instruments in raifing up the church at the glorious period already mentioned, and who shall be so eminently distinguished by the gifts and graces of the Spirit, that they may be ranked in some respect with the apostles themselves. I fee no impropriety however in fuppofing that this may be really the case. But it is sufficient for the purpose of this vision, that men of fuch a spirit shall then be raised

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up, eminently qualified for the arduous work, and remarkably diftinguished for their fuccess in it. I shall only further observe, that it is perfectly in the manner of fcripture to reprefent eminent faints long fince gone into heaven, as appearing upon earth again, when others of a fimilar spirit come in their room. In this very prophecy, for instance, the ancient martyrs are represented as raised from the dead, when perfons of their superior character and temper shall appear again in the church. It was in like manner foretold, that Elias should come again before the appearance of the Messiah: but we know, from the event, that it was not Elias to whom the prediction referred, but a person of a similar character, John the Baptift. If then it had been the defign of prophecy

phecy, upon any occasion, fymbolically to represent the two reformations that were to be effected by thefe extraordinary men, how could this have been more fimply, and at the fame time more fignificantly done, than by an exhibition of two Eliases instead of one? In like manner; what can more naturally reprefent a first and second converfion of the world to Christianity, than the doubling of the number of apostles, as the dignified instruments by whom they should both be accomplished?

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COMMENTARY

ON THE

REVELATION.

CHAP. I.

THE first three verses are pro- CHAP. perly the title of the book, and although, at first fight, they seem to have been prefixed by a different hand, yet this is not probable, as we know of no inspired man to whom it may be ascribed, and as it is much in the manner of this apostle to fpeak of himself in the third perfon,

CHAP. fon *, which, by the way, is one of the internal proofs of the authenticity and genuineness of the whole.

EXPLANATION OF THE TITLE.

Verse 1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his fervants things which must shortly come to pass, and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his fervant John.

This book is called a Revelation, which properly fignifies a difcovery, or manifestation, of any object that lies out of view. Here it fignifies a prophetical discovery of the future events relating to the flate and circumstances of the church, and of the world, fo far as they stand connected with one another, from

^{*} See John xix. 26, 35. and xxi. 20, 24.

from the days of this apostle to the CHAP. end of time. It is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ, because this discovery was made by him. It is added. which God gave unto him, which can be understood only in respect of his mediatorial character: that he might shew unto his servants, including in this appellation, the ministers of the gospel, and likewise all the faints: the things which must shortly come to pass; meaning those great prophetical events which were foon to begin to receive their accomplishment: and be sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John, employing, as appears from the fubfequent part of this book, fometimes one, fometimes another of those celestial spirits to assist the apostle in apprehending the vifions which he beheld? Verfe



² Mr. Lowman and others observe, that, in the style

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Verse 2. Who bare record b of the word of God, and of the restimony c of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw—giving a faithful account of the scheme

ftyle of prophecy, every thing is called an angel that notifies a meffage from God; and are of opinion, that all that is meant by the expression here is, that John received the revelation in visions, or sensible representations: But it is evident, that this is a plain and simple narration, and therefore is to be understood in the common meaning of language.

- b This is likewise perfectly in the manner of the apostle John. See John xix. 35.
- c I cannot think, with some learned expositors, that the apostle here refers to what he had formerly testified or recorded in his gospel. It is certainly more natural to understand him as referring to the revelation of which he was just now speaking, and upon the detail of which he was immediately to enter; and when we consider the nature of that revelation, it determines the sense of these expressions, the word of God, to the scheme of things which is there disclosed, and the testimony of Jesus Christ seems best to be understood,

of divine providence and grace, CHAP. which was certified to him in the strongest manner by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in the various and wonderful visions which he laid open before him.

These assonishing discoveries the apostle well knew to be of the greatest importance to Christians, and therefore he takes the earliest opportunity of recommending them to their most earnest attention, by the following striking observation.

Verse 3. Bleffed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

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not of the testimony to his character, which is contained in this book, but of the testimony which he gave to the things which the apostle heard and faw. See chap. xxii. 20.

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Those who attend to the reprefentations which are here exhibited, shall derive great instruction and benefit from them. By contemplating before hand the important events of Providence that are afterwards to be realized, they shall come prepared to every occurrence when it arrives, and shall feel themselves enabled to look forward to the end of all things with confidence and joy. And even at that early period it was immediately interesting to the church, because the time when they were to begin to be accomplished was very near.

OF THE ADDRESS AND SALUTATION.

This book, by its being infcribed to particular churches, hath fomething of the form and appearance of an epiftle. But this appearance

ance is infantly dropped; and, ex- CHAP. cept when addressing unto them the epiftles of Christ, the writer takes no further notice of them, either by direction, or reproof, or encouragement, through the whole of the narration. He expresses no particular affection for them, does not request their prayers, fends no falutations of the Christians to them, but only concludes with a fhort form of benediction.

The address runs in the following fimple terms.

Ver. 4. John, to the seven churches which are in Asia; -which seven churches are afterwards particularly named. Perhaps it may here be proper to observe, that, though this book was addressed equally to all those churches, it is not likely that the apostle would fend more than one copy among them, especially T confidering

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confidering his great age, and the time and labour which would be necessary to write so large a book (a). It is probable that this copy would be left at Ephesus, a place for which

(4) The infirmities which the apostle must then have felt, add further evidence to this opinion. Ecclefiaftical hiftory reprefents him as under great bodily weakness after his return from Patmos; as able to do little more than repeat his favourite exhortation to Christian charity or love. The poor accommodation, and feanty fubfiftence which he received, during his banishment, would naturally bear hard upon his conftitution, and very probably the intenfeness of the extafy in which he must often have been held, and the radiance of the visions which were displayed before him, would contribute to produce a greater degree of debility than he would otherwife have experienced. At any rate, how little is to be expected, in the way of bodily labour, from an old man at nearly the age of an hundred years. All thefe things confidered, the writing out of a fingle copy was perhaps too much for him to do, had it not been done at intervals in Patmos, fo that he had nothing but the introduction to prefix to it afterwards.

he feems to have had a particular fa- CHAP. vour. Possibly he might reside there at that very time, and deliver it to the angel, or minister, of that church, with his own hand; with an injunction to fend it to the other churches, that they might take copies of it, and return it.

The manner of the falutation differs confiderably from that of the other epistolary writings. The apostle says, Grace be unto you and peace, thereby undoubtedly praying for all spiritual bleffings to them. He adds-From him which is, and which was, and which is to come-by whom he evidently means the Father. But the difficulty lies in understanding the following expressions, when he fubjoins—and from the seven spirits which are before the throne. They certainly cannot be understood of any created spirits however exalted. Thefe

CHAP. These are limited in their faculties, and dependent upon God as well as we, and therefore how could they either hear or answer his requests? And if we believe the Son to be a divine person, it is very unnatural to suppose that a fet of beings, which are only mere creatures, should intervene between the Father and him in this prayer for all the variety of bleffings, which all the varied fituations and characters of every individual belonging to those churches might stand in need of. It is much more fuitable to the true Christian doctrine upon this important point, as well as to the manner of the apostles in such falutations, to understand the expresfions as denoting the divine all-perfect Spirit himfelf. It has often been observed that feven was a number of perfection among the Jews, and therefore

therefore it would be well under- CHAP. flood to express the fense which is now affigned to it; his being before the throne of God, may be confidered as denoting his conftant readiness to execute his office.

The apostle concludes his falutation, by praying for grace and peace to them, as from the Faher and the all-perfect Spirit alike, fo also—from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. These unquestionably are characters peculiar to Christ. But how is he to be understood as the faithful witness, in contradistinction to all the prophets who have witneffed in the name of God? Did not they bear faithful testimony in the truths which they delivered? It must be acknowledged that they did. Yet our Lord Jesus is called, by

CHAP. by way of diffinction and eminence, The Faithful Witness, and well does he merit this appellation. He teftifies concerning God in a manner tar fuperior to them: For no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him. Therefore we find him faying to Nicodemus, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; for no man hath ascended up into beaven but the Son of man, who is in beaven. Hence his testimony is incomparably beyond that of the ancient prophets, who often did not understand the things which they testified: whereas our Lord was intimately acquainted with all the truths which he delivered, and was able to explain the reasons upon which they stood.

With respect to the nature of of the testimony which he bore, it must have carried a conviction along

along with it beyond that of any CHAP. other testimony. He not only maintained it with firmness, and fealed it with his blood; but he did what no other witness ever did, or could do: He rested the great strength of his testimony, not even upon his death, but upon his refurrection from the dead; and he plainly intimated, that if he did not rife again his testimony was not true.

Therefore the apostle immediately takes notice of this circumstance, and speaks of him as the first begotten from the dead. But he feems to employ it particularly for the comfort of his disciples, considering his refurrection as the first fruits, and therefore the pledge and earnest of their future resurrection.

It is altogether unnecessary here to enter into any argument about those

CHAP, those who were raised from the dead prior to our Lord's refurrection, as if this invalidated what is here afferted; for every attentive reader must observe, that it is only in the view of his rifing as a public person, that he is here spoken of. His riling, as the head of a body, which was afterwards to be raifed in its order, and of which his refurrection was the pledge. Any refurrection, therefore, of private perfons that might have taken place before his, in whatever way it might be accounted for, cannot affect this great and leading principle. Inflances of this kind could be no pledge of the refurrection of others, as his refurrection was. And therefore, as he is the only person that has rifen in a public character, as the head of a great body that was to follow, he is flyled, with great propriety

priety and truth, the first begotten from the dead, just as Paul styles him, in the same verse, the first fruits of them that slept. CHAP.
I.

The last character under which he is here described, is that of the Prince of the kings of the earth. This may be understood as significantly infinuating his universal and supreme dominion. But we should perceive its particular intent and energy still better, did we consider it as denoting his absolute power over all earthly potentates, which the original word * properly signifies, and under it the ruler of the kings of the earth.

How admirably adapted are these titles to the instruction and comfort of the saints! while the apostle prays for blessings to them from above, he exhibits the Father in the eternity and unchangeableness of

his

^{*} מפאטייני

CHAP. his majefty;—the all-perfect Spirit, in his gracious and constant agency; and the divine Redeemer as the revealer and testifier of the wavs of God to men; as the fure witness, or martyr, who confirmed his doctrine, not only by his death, but by fliewing that death had no power over him: who rose triumphant from the grave, and now reigns in glory in the heavens, ordering all things for his people's good. What fentiments of hope and confidence and joy, are these prospects of the divine nature fitted to inspire! The apostle seems to have felt all the ardour of adoring gratitude, in contemplating the wonders of that grace which he was now imploring for the faints, and therefore he breaks forth into this animated fong of praise:

CHAP.

---Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.

The immediate object of this doxology is the Redeemer himfelf, the great dispenser of divine beneficence to men. It was he that loved us, and that loved us to fuch an amazing degree as even to lay down his life for us. He poured out his precious blood to cleanfe our fouls from guilt, and thereby to prevent us from finking down into perdition. Not only fo, he has likewife raifed us to the highest honours, combining in our character all that was ever reckoned great and venerable upon the earth, making us kings and priests unto God; giving us

world, and quickening us together with himfelf, and raifing us up, and making us to fit together with him in the heavenly places. To him this enraptured apostle ascribes glory and dominion for ever, and ever.---Another plain act of worship addressed Christ, and therefore a confirming evidence of his divine character and Godhead.

This glory of his fhall foon be made manifest. For,

Ver. 7. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him. And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen.

Christ's coming in clouds, in the language of scripture, signisses his coming in the glory of his power.

In this manner he shall certainly come at the end of this world. Then indeed every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him. But it cannot be said, in the proper meaning of language, that all the kindreds, or tribes, of the earth shall wail because of him (a). For though this shall be a day of horror and lamentation to the wicked, it shall be a day of gladness

CHAP.
I.

(a) I know, that in the prophecies of this book, the earth is fometimes put for the world, in contradiffinction to the church, and that the inhabitants of the earth are put for the ungodly and wicked, upon whom the woes of divine judgement were to fall. And I should reckon it a just and fatisfying interpretation of the expression here, to understand it in this manner, had the appostle begun to open any of those scenes in which the church and the world are distinguished from one another, under the notion of an heavenly and an earthly state. But nothing of this kind being as yet introduced, it appears too unnatural and violent for an enquiring mind to acquiesce in.

CHAP. nefs and triumph to the righteous. But there are other flrong reasons to induce us to understand the coming of Christ, in this passage, not so properly of his last magnificent appearance, as of his coming by the display of his supreme dominion, and of his fovereign grace, in the various dispositions of providence which are afterwards unfolded. There he evidently flands forth as the protector of his church, against all the power and policy of this world, and shews that in him the ancient prediction is accomplished, Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. There he appears as the justifier of his people's cause, in taking vengeance on their most haughty perfecutors; first, in the destruction of Rome heathen, afterwards in the destruction of Rome antichristian; and of the Turkish empire, that

that wide extended tyranny, which has fo long obstructed the progress of Christianity, and discovered the most contemptuous and virulent enmity against it. At length he appears in the glory of his spiritual conquest, bringing all the nations in fubjection under him. Then it may be faid with great propriety, in the language of this prophecy, that every eye shall see him, and seeing him shall submit unto him, and (even) they also which pierced him; for then his ancient people, penetrated with a fense of their attrocious guilt, and of the just and exemplary punishment under which they have fo long been lying, shall return unto him again.—They shall return, according to the ancient patterns of repentance, with weeping and lamentation, and mourning: and thus all kindreds of the earth, or rather,

CHAP. I. CHAP.

as the words more properly fignify, all the tribes of the land, meaning the whole of the tribes of Ifrael, wherever they are fcattered abroad over the face of the earth, Shall wail because of him (1).

Of

(a) This passage has more difficulty in it than most persons, at first fight, would imagine. It has been generally understood of what is called the fecond coming of Christ: But commentators feem all to have been confcious that it was fomewhat unnatural for the apostle to seize upon the extremity at once, and to usher in a long and complicated feries of predictions with the laft appearance of Christ upon the earth, and still more to speak of this as if it were not at any great diftance. Therefore those who have gone into this opinion, endeavour to account for the apparent improbability, from the practice which is observed in human compositions, in sometimes placing the ultimate object to which they refer in their very front, not confidering that a person under the influence of prophetic infpiration cannot be supposed to attend to the rules of human art.

Others

Of this coming of Christ in a glorious manner, in the course of these prophecies, the apostle brings

CHAP.

Others again have been fo much struck with the allusion to a passage in ancient prophecy, that they have understood this coming of Christ entirely of the conversion of the Jews, and thereby have given it a fense as unnatural as the former. The allufion to Zachariah's prophecy of that grand event, is indeed too evident to pass unnoticed. The prophet fays, they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him. The apostle fays, they who pierced him shall see him. He adds, in the very expressions of our Lord, which probably glance at the same object, and all the tribes of the earth, or of the land, shall wail because of him. And when we consider the extraordinary, and perhaps miraculous difplay of the power and grace of the Redeemer that shall then take place, we shall not be surprifed at his being reprefented as coming even in the clouds, upon that occasion. But those who restrict the coming of our Lord, which is here spoken of, folely to that event, can never give an adequate meaning to these expressions, and every eye shall

CHAP. an elegant proof, from the defignations which he heard him assume. But we shall enter more easily into his

> fee him; besides the improbability of the apostle's fingling out any one important event in this prophecy, and calling it the coming of Christ, while he passes by all the rest. But if we understand this passage, as I have above explained it, of Christ's coming in his glorious power, by the accomplishment of those various revolutions of providence, which are afterwards predicted, every circumstance will appear natural and easy; and though we cannot suppose that the all-inspiring Spirit of God is guided by the rules of human composition, yet we see a peculiar propriety and beauty in his directing the apostle to insert in the very introduction to these prophecies, this declaration of the all-difpoling agency of Christ, which was to be illustriously displayed in a variety of instances in the events to which they referred.

> I cannot forbear adding to this note, though already too long, that when we speak of the recovery of God's ancient people, we must not restrict the meaning to those who are properly called Jews, but must extend it to the whole of the tribes

his meaning, if we take the last two words of this verse, and make them the beginning of the next, rendering CHAP.
I.

of Israel. These, we have every reason to believe, from the ancient prophecies, shall be recovered as well as the other.

What can we make of the following prophecies, unless we understand them in this extensive import, Isaiah xi. 11, 12. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the fecond time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Jer. xxxiii. 7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the Hosea i. 11. Then shall the children of Judah, and the children of Israel, be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land : for great shall be the day of Jezman rendering them according to their import, in the following manner.

Ver. 8. Yes, verily, (for) I am Aliba and Omega, the beginning and the ending,

reel. It may be faid indeed, that the description may be a hyperbolical way of expressing the honour and dignity to which the Jewish people shall still be raifed, by a comparison with the times of their highest prosperity of old. But what authority has any person for such an interpretation? Nothing can be more certain than that we have the very fame ground for expecting the reftoration of the ancient Ifraelites as of the lews. It is declared as plainly as the other, and indeed in language of the very fame import; and as they cannot with any plaufibility be supposed to have returned with the Jews from their captivity, which fome have imagined *, we must look for this event at a period as yet to come. Is it not strange then that this part of the prophecy should be so little thought of, the attention of Christians being almost entirely confined to the other? It is not

^{*} See Whitaker's history of Arianism.

ending, faith the Lord, which is, and CHAP. which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

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These words express so strongly the eternal power and Godhead of the Redeemer, that there is no evading their force, but by proving, what no perfon has yet been able to do, that they are fpoken, not by the Son, but by the Father. The manner in which they are introduced.

not easy to account for this, except upon the principle that this people are probably long fince funk among the nations, and therefore that it would be an useless miracle to distinguish them, as this could not admit of any evidence. Upon the fame principle, the refurrection of the body has been controverted, as a miracle to no purpose, because any other body would do as well. But we cannot be guilty of a higher degree of prefumption, than when we pretend to interpret what God has declared, not of what he has faid he will do, but of what we think proper for him to do.

CHAP.
I.

duced, affords the highest probability, that they were fpoken by the Son. The declaration which they contain, confifts of two parts, which I conceive have a very different meaning and object. The first is a proverbial phrase, I am Alpha and Omega (a), which is immediately explained by the following words, the beginning and the ending. This is not to be understood of the eternity and unchangeableness of our Lord's existence, for then the expressions, which is, and which was, and which is to come, would be a mere repetition without the least additional meaning. But it is to be understood of his pledging himfelf as the divine accomplisher of the whole ferres of the prophecies of this book from beginning

^(*) The first and the last letters of the Greeks.

beginning to end (b); and, as the fe- CHAP. curity for this could only rest upon the unchangeable eternity and omnipotence of his nature, therefore it is subjoined, faith the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty, ascribing in the clearest and most energetic language, these incommunicable perfections

to

(b) This is agreeable to the manner in which the Jews employed this proverbial phrase. So far from its being confidered as a necessary expresfion of eternity, we find them applying it to the beginning and ending of the law of God. Thus, Lightfoot quotes feveral passages from the writings of their Rabbies-where they fay, " Abraham " and Sarah performed all the law from Aleph to "Thaw." And again, "He that walks in inte-" grity, is as if he performed all the law from " Aleph to Thaw." And as I conceive that almost the whole of this book is a translation by the apostle himself, I have no doubt that this proverbial declaration, in the form in which he received it, would run in the common Hebrew terms.

CHAP. to himfelf, and thereby giving the ftrongest possible assurance that all his predictions shall be most certainly fulfilled.

> Ver. o. I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribuistion, and in the kingdom and patience of Jefus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

> There is fcarcely any thing in this verse that requires interpretation. It may be proper, however, to give fome account of the occafion and circumstances of the apostle's banishment. In the year 95 the Emperor Domitian began to perfecute the church of Christ. Among those who suffered in that fiery trial was this venerable man, whom his matter had fo highly honoured,

noured, and who was now far ad- CHAP. vanced in labours and in years. He was charged with fedition, the very name of which excites the jealoufy of tyrants: and what was the fedition of which he was guilty? Had he disturbed the order of society? No. Had he relaxed the obligations of fubjects to their rulers? No. He had only preached the glad tidings of the gospel of peace. But to shake the imperial superstition by this novel doctrine was at that time reckoned fedition. The apoftle therefore was found guilty, and condemned. The frequent punishment that was then inflicted for this crime, was banishment. Small and defert islands, or at least those that were very poorly inhabited, were commonly chosen as the places for inflicting the fentence. Patmos anfwered to this description in both

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thofe

CHAP those respects (2). Thither therefore was John banished for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, and there he received those magnificent visions which are the fubject of this book. On the detail of

> (a) This island, now known by the name of Palmofa, was anciently supposed to be about thirty miles in circumference, but modern geographers have reduced it to a much narrower compafs. lies off the coast of Asia, in the Ægean sea, about thirty miles from Miletus. Its furface is mountainous, and its foil is rocky and barren. Bochart observes, that in the Arabic paraphrase, it is written Batmos, and thinks it derived this appellation from its producing the turpentine tree (terebenthus) which both in the Syriac and Chaldee is called nearly by the fame name. This agrees well with the nature of the country, for Hasselquest found this tree growing wild upon the rocks of Mount Tabor. In this island, legend has preserved the house in which St. John lived, which the inhabitants call the Apocalypfe.

of the introductory one he immediately enters, when he fays,

CHAP. I.

Ver. 10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.

To be in the Spirit, here, fignifies to be thrown into an extafy by the miraculous energy of the Holy Spirit. By the Lord's day, is evidently to be understood, the day which Christians have kept facred in honour of their Divine Master ever since his resurrection from the dead; and a great voice, as of a trumpet, denotes, a voice very strong and solemn, and awful (b). This voice spake unto him,

Ver.

(b) I take the words to fignify properly, a voice as of a great trumpet, intimating, that it could be compared to no ordinary trumpet, and perhaps alluding

CHAP. I. Ver. 11. Saying I am Alpha and O-mega, the first and the last, (words which have been already explained) and what thou seest (°), write in a book, and send it

alluding to the great trumpet, the fignal of the divine prefence at the giving of the law. See Exod.

(°) What thou feeft, must be understood as fignifying what thou shalt see; for as yet he had seen nothing. It is a strange notion which has been entertained by fome, that John faw all the visions of this book in one day. This will appear quite incredible, when we confider that he must then have written them all on the fame day likewife; for we learn, from chap. x. 4. that it was his practice to write each vision immediately after he beheld it. Add to this, not only the time which must have been spent in contemplating those visions, but the time which it must have taken to explain them to him-the time which must have passed while he was eating the little book; that is to fay, meditating upon its contents, and digesting them in his thoughts; and finally, that the apostle was then advanced to an extreme old

it unto the feven churches which are in CHAP. Afia; unto Ephefus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Ver. 12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me; and, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.

These are afterwards explained by our Lord himfelf, as fignifying churches; and what can be a fitter emblem of the illumination and fervour of a fociety of Christians than a burning lamp!

Ver. 13. And, in the midst of the seven candlesticks.

age; that he wrote in a foreign language, and wrote probably in capitals, as is the case in the earlieft manuscripts which have come down to us, and we shall plainly perceive that, without a miracle, for which there is no reason, all this variety of employment must have required a much longer period.

CHAP. candlesticks, ONE like unto the son of man,

i. &c.

This description is altogether of a mystical nature; and though the apostle only speaks of him as one like unto a Son of man, intimating, that his appearance was in human form; yet it is evident that he at length understood him to be the Son of God. The manner of his drefs unites in it the dignity both of priest and king. His head and his hair; or, in proper English, the hair of his head being white as wool, as white as Inow, reprefents him in the venerable character of age, the emblem of wifdom. His eyes being as a flame of fire, denotes his all-penetrating difcernment. His feet being like pure brafs, as if they burned in a furnace, fignifies the purity and firmness of his conduct. And his voice being like the found of many waters,

waters, to any one who has ever had CHAP. occasion to observe the awful roaring which the ocean fometimes makes upon the shore, will recal an idea at once highly majestic and fublime. His having in his right hand feven stars, intimates, the support and direction which he affords to his faithful ministers. The two-edged sword, which went out of his mouth, is the emblem of his vengeance. And his countenance as the fun shining in his frength, as it does not require, so it absolutely annihilates all illustrarion.

The apostle next informs us of the effect of this magnificent vision upon himfelf, and of the condescenfion and grace of his Almighty Lord, which he then experienced.

Ver. 17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand

CHAP. hand upon me, faying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, (the great conductor of the affairs of my church and people:)

> Ver. 18. Even the living Being himfelf; (this is the exact rendering of the words: our translation infinitely diminishes the sense:) And I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore. (Intimating, that his priefthood was unchangeable; and therefore, as St. Paul had Arongly argued, he was able to fave to the very end of time, at least till he should deliver his church out of all her troubles). Upon hearing this reviving truth, the apostle was filled with ardour, and could not refrain expressing his cordial acquiescence, by interposing his amen. When the Saviour again proceeds---and bave the keys of hell and of death. That is

to fay, have absolute authority over death and his dark domains: or, perhaps the meaning may be more simply, and at the same time more accurately expressed, by understanding hell and death, as signifying, the deadly prison of the grave, of which the keys were in his hand; intimating, that none should go down into it, or fall under its power, without his orders; and that none could be detained in it when he should command their release (a).

CHAP.

(a) No fatisfying evidence has yet been brought to fhew that bades, here, and in other places, rendered bell, ever fignifies in the New Testament the state of separate spirits at large. It is most commonly used to signify the grave. We have every reason to believe that this is the sense of it here, and that the expressions hades and death, according to the Hebrew idiom, denote properly the deadly hades or the grave. This is represent-

CHAP. Here he feems particularly to comfort his fainting apostle, by making him to understand that he has power to support the imbecility of nature, even when apparently finking down into the grave; and that none of his difciples need to feel any apprehensions, even upon entering into its gloomy manfions. There they can receive no injury, and they shall be raised up to endless joy.

> Thus, wonderfully restored by the power and grace of his Divine Master, the apostle receives the following instruction from him.

> > Ver.

ed under the notion of a prison, or strong hold, of which our Lord has the keys, to thut up in it, or to preserve from it, as he pleases. What a flriking proof is this of his fovereign power, by which he is able both to fave and to deftroy.

CHAP.

Ver. 19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

Ver. 20. The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches.

It is matter of fome difficulty to interpret these apparently plain and simple words. If we understand them as an injunction to the apostle respecting the whole of the revelations contained in this book, then the meaning will be, give an account, in writing, of the vision which thou hast beheld; likewise of the present state of the Asiatic churches, as I shall describe it, and

CHAP. of the discoveries relating to future times which I fhall reveal. But I flrongly fuspect, from what is faid in the 20th verse, that this is not the true interpretation. The terms in which this injunction is conveyed, feem to restrict it to what the apostle had already beheld. Write, fays the exalted Saviour, the things which thou hast seen, EVEN the things which are, and the things which shall be after these, the mystery of the seven stars, and of the feven golden candlefticks; intimating, one should think, very plainly, that these stars and candleflicks, in their myflical import, refpected both the things which then were, and the things which should be after them. But it was necessary that their emblematical meaning should likewise be specified; therefore they are afterwards explained, as denoting feven gospel ministers CHAP. and gospel churches.

This affords a strong presumption, independent of all other circumstances, that the following epiftles to those ministers and churches, not only describe their character and flate at that time, but likewife that they have a prophetical aspect, and are addressed to them, as types of fimilar characters and conditions of the church in after ages.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

CHAP.

THE grand prophetical discoveries which it was the purpose of this book particularly to defcribe, were exhibited to the eye of this wondering apoille, upon a very fublime and magnificent theatre. Thither he is careful to conduct his reader, before he enters upon the interesting detail. This is an excellent preparative to the fludy of these prophecies. The aftonishing magnificence of the scene arrests the attention, and wraps up the foul in the most elevated contemplation. The awful folemnity with which the opening of the book of these prophecies was accompanied, fixes down upon

upon the mind a fense of their valt importance; and the glory of the heavenly world, which is there fo ftrikingly displayed, will support and animate the ferious enquirer while hetraces the various and difficult steps of the church in her progress to that exalted state. This chapter, and the following, are wholly taken up in these sublime descriptions. And though they are carried on with great fimplicity and exactness, the apostle telling us what he faw and heard, perhaps as clearly as words could express; yet, as might well be expected upon fuch a fubject, we shall find it sometimes hard to understand his meaning.

CHAP IV.

Ver. 1. After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard, was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come

CHAP. IV. up bither, and I will shew thee things which must be bereafter.

He here intimates, that another magnificent vision was about to be exhibited to his view, after the tranfactions respecting the former were finished; but whether immediately, or at fome distance of time, he gives us no ground to determine. He informs us, that as he looked; probably, while he was devoutly mufing, with his eyes lifted up to heaven, he faw a ftrange and wonderful fight. He beheld, as if an entry was opened into heaven, the ethereal vault appearing to be rent, or feparated, in fuch a manner as that he could penetrate a little into the glory that was within. It is likewise not improbable, that it appeared lowered upon that occasion; or, in the beautiful language of scripture,

fcripture, that the heavens were bowed, or bended downwards, that fo he might more easily hear the voice which spake to him, and obey its direction in going up thither. He does not seem as yet to have beheld any of the heavenly beings. But he heard the voice of his Divine Matter (a), saying, Come O up

CHAP.
IV.

(a) I have faid, that this was the voice of his Divine Master; and I think myself warranted in this by the apostle's words, though it does not appear in our Bibles. Our translators have well supplied no before 'nviwymin in the former part of the verse, which, by the same analogy, ought to be fupplied before Ligoure in the latter, thus xai'n cavn'n πρωτη 'ην ηχουσα ως σαλπιγγος λαλουσης μετ' εμου (ην) λεγουσα the exact rendering of which is: And the first voice which I heard, as of a trumpet, talking with me, faid; and can it be doubted, that by the first voice, which he heard, he here refers to the voice which he heard in the first vision, and which he describes as a great voice of a trumpet. This voice he well knew again, when it was now expected, and therefore he flews no anxiety to discover whose voice it was, as he formerly did.

IV.

up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter; denoting, that this was to be the general scene of those prophetical visions which he was afterwards to behold.

Ver. 2. And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold a throne was fet in heaven, and one fat on the throne.

Ver. 3. And he that fat, was to look upon, like a jasper, and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

To be in the Spirit, denotes, as was formerly observed, to be wrapt up in a spiritual extacy, and to perceive sublime and heavenly visions (b). This was certainly the case

(5) When the apostle tells us again, that he was in the Spirit, are we not led to conceive that there was some considerable interval between this and the former vision, in which he was not in the Spirit,

case with the apostle upon this occasion, when he felt himself instantly translated to heaven, and both faw and heard those wonderful things which he goes on to relate. The first object that engages his aftonished contemplation was a fplendid and glorious throne, which he beheld in heaven, and Jehovah himself represented as seated upon it, not by any bodily appearance, or shape, but by fignificant and ftriking emblems. He was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone; the one, by its mild and placid afspect, fitly denoting his clemency and mercy; the other, by its bright and fiery fplendour, reprefenting his holiness and justice. The very circumstance

CHAP:

Spirit, but left to his ordinary perceptions? This circumstance increases the improbability of their interpretation who think that this revelation was all given in one day.

CHAP.
IV.

circumstance of his being seated upon the heavenly throne was fymbolical of the fovereignty of his power; while the figure of a rainbow encircling the throne, chiefly made up of a beautiful and shining green, like that of the emerald, was strongly expressive of his faithfulness. How naturally may we fuppose the language of the holy Pfalmist to come into the apostle's mind upon this occasion: O! Lord God of Hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth go before thy face (a).

But

⁽a) It is not a little furprifing, that Mr. Lowman should reject as fanciful the emblematical interpretation of this description; especially, when we find him, at the same time, adopting its leading import. He seems to have thought with Vitringa, and others, that the apostle beheld the appearance seated upon

But while he was devoutly furveying this magnificent display of the glory of Jehovah, his attention was turned to a variety of different appearances, which tended greatly to elevate his mind, and gave vast folemnity to the scene. Let us follow

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the throne; but it is certain that there is not the most distant intimation of this in the whole of the description. The evident similarity of this vision, to that of the throne of God which Ezekiel faw, where the figure of a man was beheld, is too loofe a foundation for supporting this opinion. There is ftrong reason to believe, that the person who is there reprefented, is he who was afterwards to appear as the Son of man. But the person who is represented here, must be understood to be the Father; and therefore it was fit that the spirituality of the divine nature should not be confounded with the appearance of any bodily shape. Emblematical colours, and figures, and appearances then, are all that we have to go upon in forming that conception of the divine majesty which is here certainly intended to be conveved.

IV.

low him in his simple and admirable description.

Ver. 4. And round about the throne were four and twenty feats; and upon the feats I face four and twenty elders fitting, cloathed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

It is matter of much enquiry, who these four and twenty elders were, that were seated about the the throne, each on a seat, or little throne, apart by himself. This I have already endeavoured to investigate in a separate differtation; I shall only here observe, that they must have been persons of high distinction in the church, as they had such an honourable station assigned them about the throne. Their white raiment is a mark of their acceptance and triumph;

and the golden crowns upon their CHAP. heads, are expressive of the dignity and glory to which they are raised.

Ver. 5. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunders, and voices,

These awful appearances were the frequent attendants of any glorious display of the divine presence and majesty in ancient times. The giving of the law has been commonly mentioned as an inflance of this, and the fublime description of the divine prefence by David, in the xviiith pfalm; by Ifaiah, chap. lxiv; by Micah, chap. i; and by Habakkuk, chap. iii; are all inftances of the fame kind. But what is more precifely to our prefent purpose

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pose, when Isaiah beheld the Lord fitting upon his throne, and his train filling the temple, the vision was accompanied with awful appearances of a fimilar nature; voices were heard; the posts of the door were moved at them; and the house was filled with fmoke*. In all these instances, the character of God is displayed as the judge and ruler of his people, and as taking vengeance on his enemies. fame thing, no doubt, is intended here: and it was fit that the divine majefty should be exhibited in this tremendous view upon the delivery of a train of prophecies, predicting mifery and destruction upon the wicked.

-and

[&]quot; Ifaiah vi.

—and there were seven lamps of fire CHAP. burning before the throne, which are the feven spirits of God.

Ver. 6. And before the throne, there was a fea of glass, like unto chrystal—

The allusion, in this vision, to the facred things in the ancient temple at Jerusalem, is so very obvious, that it has been taken notice of by almost all expositors. Here we are taught to fpiritualize its furniture. What can be more pure, and active, and penetrating, than a flame of fire? And when we contemplate this in its feven fold, that is to fay, its perfect radiance, how apt and lively the image which it fupplies of the illumination, and power, and agency of the feven Spirits; or, as the meaning certainly is, of the all-perfect Spirit of God, denoted here, in like manCHAP.
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ner as in the first chapter, by this number of perfection. He is represented in this vision before the throne, for the reason that was there assigned, to denote his constant readiness to execute his office in behalf of his church and people.

With respect to the sea of glass, like unto chryftal, which the apoftle faw before the throne, there can be little doubt that it was introduced, in allusion to the brazen laver in the temple (a); and it is a high indication of that purity and fanctity of character, which is necessary in making a near and folemn approach unto God. This feems more natural than to understand it as expressive of the atoning blood of Christ, which is particularly set forth in a fubfequent part of the vision,

^(*) Solomon made a molten Sea, I Kings vii. 23.

vision, by the emblem of a Lamb that was flain.

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—and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

Ver. 7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face like a man, and the fourth beast was like a stying eagle.

Ver. 8. And the four beafts had each of them fix wings about him; and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come *.

Ver. 9. And when those beasts give glory and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever:——

This

^{*} For the meaning of these verses, see Differtation II.

IV.

This afcription of glory and honour, and thanks, must be different from the other act of worship, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. The former they are represented as continually engaged in: this belongs only to particular occasions; namely, the great evolutions of providence respecting the church on earth. In these the elders are especially and deeply interested, and therefore they are with great propriety introduced upon these occasions as in the two following verses:

Ver. 10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that fat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever. and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Ver. 11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for

for thou hast created all things, and for CHAP. thy pleasure they are and were created.

Here God is represented as the great proprietor of all things, by whom they were brought into being, and for whose glory they were made; and from this ascription of glory and honour and power to him, we may reasonably conclude, that it refers to some great interpofitions of his fovereign dominion, for the destruction of his enemies, and the fafety and prosperity of his church on earth.

CHAP.

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Ver. 1. And I faw in the right hand of bim that fat on the throne, a book, written within and on the backfide, fealed with seven seals.

> This is the vision which stands immediately connected with the developement of the mysteries of providence, which the apostle afterwards defcribes. The book which he faw was the book of providence, containing the grand events that were to take place respecting the church, and fome of her greatest enemies, from the days of the apostle to the end of time. It was full of important matter, therefore it is faid to have been written within.

within, and on the backfide. In order to understand this, we must first be told that it was not in the form of modern books, but consisted of sheets of parchment, rolled upon one another around a cylinder, and written upon both sides (a), which was feldom done, except when the inside could not hold all the writing: it was fealed with (b) seven feals, at the opening of each of which, one entire part, full of emblematical representation, seems to



- (a) Vitringa's reason for understanding the words in this verse is quite unanswerable; namely, that if the backside here did not refer to the writing, but only to the sealing of the book, it would not have been mentioned at all, because there was no other place upon which it could be sealed but on the backside.
- (b) Only one of these however appeared at a time. When the first was opened, and the part belonging to it rolled off, then the second appeared, and so on to the last.

V.

have come off. This book was held in the right hand of him that fat on the throne, intimating, that the knowledge of future events belongs only to God. But we fee, from what follows, that he can communicate it to whom he pleafes; but that it is only to objects of his peculiar favour to whom this privilege is granted. Therefore the apostle subjoins,

Ver. 2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loofe the seals thereof.

From the answer to this question it appears, that such were the discoveries which this book contained, that it required the highest character and merit to be permitted to take it out of the hand of him that sat upon the throne, and to look upon it. Accordingly it is said,

Ver.

Ver 3. And no man in beaven, nor CHAP. in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look therein.

The word* translated no man, ought to be rendered no one, meaning no creature in heaven; that is, no angel: nor in earth, that is, no man: nor under the earth; that is, no demon, or departed fpirit; who have long been supposed to be possessed of superior knowledge. None of these were permitted to open the book, or fo much as to look upon it.

This filled the apostle with great anxiety and grief, as he informs us,

Ver. 4. And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

But

CHAP.

But his forrow was foon relieved by one of the elders, who faid unto him,

Ver. 5.—weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loofe the feven feals thereof.

There can be no doubt that the person here meant is the Lord Jesus Christ. But the mystical description requires to be explained. He is called the Lion of the tribe of Juda, as commentators have well observed, in reference to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. xlix. 9. who speaks of Judah under the emblem of a lion's whelp, chiesly on account of this great and mighty one, who was to rise out of that tribe: and he is called the Root of David, as he is David's Creator and Lord, at the same time

that he fprang from his family, CHAP. according to the flesh. The intimation, that he had prevailed to open the book, and to loofe the feven feals thereof, while it filled the apostle with joy, roused his attention to discover, if possible, this wonderful person. This he intimates in the following words:

Ver. 6. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been flain, having seven horns, and feven eyes, which are the feven Spirits of God fent forth into all the earth.

Nothing can be more evident than that the four beafts are here represented as very near the throne, and nearer, indeed, than either the elders or any of the other beings that are mentioned. It is quite neceffary CHAP. V.

cessary fo to understand the passage, otherwife it would give no determinate description of the place in which the Lamb was beheld, which it certainly was intended to do. This entirely overthrows the interpretation of Mr. Mede, who places them at a diffance from the throne, towards the opposite quarters of the world. The apostle, then, beheld this mystical person, as it were, in the midst of the throne, which must have been transparent, and hence become a throne of mercy and of grace; he carried the marks of his propitiatory facrifice along with him, in appearing as if he had been flain. He appeared likewife, baving feven borns, the emblem of fupreme authority and power; and feven eyes, denoting, his having the all-perfect Spirit of God. Need we wonder then that he prevailed to open the

the book, and to loofe the feven feals thereof. CHAP. His fupreme dignity and excellency made him worthy to do it, and by his possessing the all-perfect Spirit of God, he was completely qualified to be the interpreter of the counsels of God to his church and people. This Spirit is further faid to be fent forth into all the earth; intimating, that Christ, in whom he dwells, manages, by his influence, all the concerns of his church in every part of the world. This wonderful person the apostle heheld, 'tiH

Ver. 7.—he came and took the book out of the hand of him that fat upon the throne.

The Lamb's taking the book out of the hand of him that fat upon the throne, occasioned great exultation

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ultation and praise among the heavenly hosts, as we learn from the following verses.

Ver. 8. And when he had taken the book, the four beafts, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of faints.

The learned reader, by looking into the original language, will eafily perceive that it was only the four and twenty elders who had the harps, and golden vials full of odours, the term (exories) agreeing only with them, and not with (fox) the beafts, who therefore ought not to be understood to join in the following fong, any farther than by their devout and cordial amen. The elders, however,

Ver.

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Ver. 9. — fung a new fong, faying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the feals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Ver. 10. And hast made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.

These elders understood well the wonderful foundation on which the honours of the Lamb are raised; that they arise from the ignominy and sufferings of his cross. Therefore they said, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth, as I have already shewed, is to be understood of the tuture triumphs

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of Christianity in the world, when it shall bring all nations in subjection to it. This exalted fong, however, did not rest with them; it was taken up by a vast multitude of angels about the throne, as we learn from the following verses.

Ver. 11. I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beafts, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

Ver. 12. Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was flain, to receive power, and riches, and honour, and glory, and bleffing.

Though the four beafts and the elders are mentioned, (v. 11) yet they are not to be understood as joining in the fong at present, but only the angels who were round about

bout the throne, and round about the beafts and the elders, whose number was so great that it is described in a language denoting that they were innumerable; and though they could not apply the merits of this wonderful person to themselves, yet they cheerfully paid him their just homage of adoration and praise. But the song at last became universal, and concluded with one grand ascription of glory and praise, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb,

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Ver. 13. And every creature, which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and fuch as are in the fea, and all that are in them, heard I, faying, Bleffing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that fitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Who that reads this animated R paffage

paffage, and believes it to be the revealed word of God, can entertain a doubt of the true and proper divinity of the Lord Jefus; here the plainest acts of adoration are paid to him that it is possible for words to express. We see not only the spirits of just men made perfect, but we fee all the angels of God worshipping him; and, as if it were meant on purpose to cut off the poor subterfuge of only inferior homage being paid to him, we fee them paying their adorations equally, and in the very fame expressions, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. In order to add the greater folemnity to this elevated fcene, and to firike the greater reverence and awe, the four beafts, by themfelves, when the fong was concluded, fubjoined their amen; and likewife

wife the four and twenty elders performed a diffinct act of worship, prostrating themselves before the throne. Thus we immediately read,

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Ver. 14. And the four beafts faid, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

THE OPENING OF THE SEALED BOOK.

I agree, in the general principle, with that class of expositors who understand the prophetical reprefentations which were exhibited at the opening of all the feals, except the laft, as referring to the great events that took place in the Roman Empire, from the date of this prophecy till its fall and ruin. The posterior date of this prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem being fo well verified by the testimony of antiquity, excludes the interpretation of those who understand them of the events which occurred curred among the Jews, from the time of the afcension of our Saviour, till the fignal defolation of that devoted people. And those who understand them chiefly of the state and circumstances of the church in the latter times of the Roman Empire, destroy the consistency of the representations; being obliged, in fome inflances, to make them denote the church, in others, the state. Besides, from the difficulties they have to encounter, they are fometimes reduced to the necessity of understanding even the interpretation of the figures in a mystical fense; not to speak of the fcanty evidence, which, in fome cases, is produced of their accomplishment in the period of history to which they are referred. Difficulties no doubt will occur upon every every scheme: but that scheme is certainly entitled to the best reception where the difficulties are least, and where all the principal objects find an easy and an adequate illustration. This is the great principle which I have pursued in the following interpretation; with what success must be left to others to determine.

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THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SEAL.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1. And I faw, when the Lamb opened one of the feals, and I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts, saying, Come, and see.

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Ver. 2. And I faw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

We have feen already that the Lamb had taken the book out of the right hand of him that fat on the throne.

throne. Now he begins to open the feals of it. This book was in the ancient form of sheets, or detached pieces, rolled one over the other. At the opening of each feal, one of these was unrolled, and its contents of confequence displayed. What is faid to have been feen, must be understood to have been certain objects exhibited by painting, or fome other means, upon these sheets, without any writing except what might be necessary to explain the representation: even this explanation may have been given in fome other way.

Many commentators have thought that there is a meaning couched under the characters of the beafts, as they are here called, or the living creatures, who give intimation of the opening of feveral of the feals. This opinion is harmlefs in those

those who understand these creatures to fignify ministers of the gospel, for it has no necessary effect upon the interpretation of the prophecy. But if they are underflood to be the figns of the feveral quarters of the camp of the ancient Ifraelites, it limits the prophecy to particular circumstances, and obliges us to look for the accomplishment of the different representations in that quarter to which the ftandards respectively belonged. As I think both these opinions are without foundation, I reckon it improper to rest any part of the interpretation upon them. The only fure ground upon which we can proceed, is to look for those events in history which come up to the full meaning of what is here represented.

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Thefe

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These living creatures are probably to be understood as acting here in an official capacity. They seem appointed to call the attention of the apostle, and perhaps of the heavenly hosts themselves, to the wonders that were to be disclosed.

The first of them spoke with a voice like thunder, saying, Come and fee. The apostle drew near, and he beheld, on the sheet that was now opened or unrolled, the following striking representation, a person riding on a white horse. A how was in his hand, or upon his shoulder, which denoted that he was a warrior;—a crown was given him, intimating, that he was to be a mighty potentate;—the very colour of the horse was expressive of triumph. And he went forth conquering and to conquer (2).

Interpreters

^(*) It is remarkable, that this and the following reprefentations,

Interpreters have generally agreed in understanding this representation to fignify the conquests and triumph of the Saviour, in the propagation and progress of the gospel, and in bringing the people in fubjection under it. What has apparently given rife to this interpretation is, the apparent fimilarity of this description to the prophecy of our Lord's spiritual victories in the xlvth pfalm. Yet, when attentively examined, there will be found very little fimilarity between them; and there is evidently nothing in this description that will not apply to any

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reprefentations, feem to have been animated. We are led to conceive, from the manner of the defcription, that the apostle saw some person putting a crown upon the head of this rider; that after this, the scene began to be in motion, and he appeared to ride forth in pursuit of the victories he was to obtain.

any great prince, fignalized by the extent of his dominion, and the glory of his conquests. If all the other feals, except the feventh, are to be understood as prophecies of the flate and circumflances of the Roman empire, as I think, with great reason they have been, why should not this be considered as referring to the fame fubject? To introduce the spiritual conquests of the Saviour, and to place them at the head of those natural and political occurrences which were to affect the state of the Roman empire for feveral ages, feems very unfuitable and inconfiftent.

If therefore we would feek for the most probable interpretation, we must relinquish this the common one. Now let us consider what was the state of the Roman Empire

o- CHAP. VI. a VI.

at the commencement of this prophecy, and we shall discover a meaning which will be fully fatisfying. It had grown great indeed, but it was far from having reached that vast magnitude and grandeur which it afterwards attained. This was referved for the atchievements of Trajan, who, from the rank of a general, was raifed to the imperial throne. In him, therefore, I conceive, we find the character and the object which the prophecy respected; and to the representation here exhibited the whole history of this prince remarkably corresponds.

He was trained up to arms from his early years, and, by a prudent conduct, joined to an active and intrepid fpirit, he foon acquired a high degree of military fame. This answers to his being represented in prophecy under the figure of a warrior.

warrior. He was a Spaniard by birth, and therefore could have no reasonable expectation of the sovereignty, as no foreigner had as yet ever been raifed to the imperial throne. Even his family was far from being great; but his person is faid to have been flately, and his appearance dignified. On account of his uncommon abilities and merit, he was adopted by Nerva, and declared his partner and fuccessor in the empire. The penetration of Nerva, in making him the object of fuch distinguished confidence and honour, was amply demonstrated by Trajan's after deportment. But it is precifely to our purpose to obferve the glory of his conquests, the vast acquisitions which he added to the Roman empire, and the dread which he diffused of the Roman power, by which he over-awed the furrounding

furrounding nations and reduced CHAP. them to obedience. To these, contemporary historians bear ample testimony. But I cannot give the reader a more concife, or more striking idea of them, than in the words of the celebrated author of the Hiftory of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire, however much I may difagree with him in fome respects.

" The first exploits of Trajan," fays he "were against the Dacians, the most warlike of men, and who, during the reign of Domitian, had infulted with impunity the majefly of Rome. To the strength and firmness of Barbarians, they added a contempt of life, which was derived from a warm perfuasion of the immortality and transmigration of the foul. Decebalus, the Dacian

king, approved himfelf a rival not

unworthy

unworthy of Trajan; nor did he defpair of his own and the public fortune, till, by the confession of his
enemics, he had exhausted every refource both of valour and policy.
This memorable war, with a very
short suspension of hostilities, lasted
five years; and as the Emperor
could exert, without controul, the
whole force of the state, it was terminated by the absolute submission
of the Barbarians.

"Trajan was ambitious of fame, and the praifes of Alexander, transmitted by a succession of poets and historians, had kindled a dangerous emulation in his mind. Like him, the Roman Emperor undertook an expedition against the nations of the east; but he lamented, with a sigh, that his advanced age scarcely left him any hope of equalling the renown of the son of Philip. Yet

the fuccess of Trajan, however tranfient, was rapid and specious. The degenerate Parthians, broken by intestine discord, fled before his arms. He descended the river Tigris in triumph, from the mountains of Armenia to the Persian Gulph. He enjoyed the honour of being the first, as he was the last, of the Roman generals, who ever navigated that remote fea. His fleets ravaged the coasts of Arabia; and Trajan vainly flattered himself that he was approaching towards the confines of India. Every day the aftonished Senate received the intelligence of new names and new nations, that acknowledged his fway. They were informed that the kings of Bosphorus, Colchos, Iberia, Albania, Ofrhoene, and even the Parthian monarch himfelf, had accepted their diadems from the hands of the Em- \mathbf{T} peror;

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peror; that the independent tribes of the Median and Carduchian hills had implored his protection, and that the rich countries of Armenia, Mefopotamia, and Affyria were reduced into the state of provinces. But the death of Trajan soon clouded the splendid prospect, and it was justly to be dreaded, that so many distant nations would throw off the unaccustomed yoke, when they were no longer restrained by the powerful hand which had imposed it."

We fee then with what propriety the fpirit of prophecy, in fetting forth the future fortunes of the Roman empire, begins with the representation of those wide extended conquests by which it was soon to attain its highest aggrandizement and glory; and how remarkably this representation was verified in the

the history which we have now recited.

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The period of this seal, as it begins with the reign of Trajan, in the year 98, continues, as we shall have occasion to shew afterwards, for 82 years, ending in the year 180 (a).

Let

(a) There is little diversity of opinion among expositors respecting the meaning of this first seal. The opinion of those who understand these prophecies chiefly of the destruction of Jerusalem, are fo evidently erroneous, that I mean not particularly to notice them, notwithstanding that they have been held by great men of high character and learning, fuch as Grotius, Howard, Lightfoot, Wetstein and others. It is remarkable however, that the late Bishop Newton, though he follows a very different scheme, agrees with fome of them in understanding the circumstances exhibited at the opening of this feal, to denote the conquests of Vespasian and Titus, and the destruction of Jerusalem. But the great body of expositors

Let us here stop for a moment to consider the instructive lessons which are taught in this remarkable prophecy.

expositors apply it, as has been observed, to the propagation of the gospel, and the spiritual conquests of the Redeemer. This is the interpretation of Bullinger, Forbes, and Bernard, and, though not very confiftently with his scheme, even of the learned Mede himfelf; likewife of Durham, Waple, Vitringa, Lowman, &c. There are many strong objections, however, to this interpretation. It is altogether uncongenial, as has been already noticed, to the emblematical import of the other horsemen, who seem best underflood of the character and circumstances of the Roman empire in its progress to ruin. it does not comport with the regal dignity of Christ upon his ascension into heaven, to suppose that the crown was given unto him only at the commencement of this vision: and finally, upon this interpretation, it destroys the regular and decifive order of this prophetical fcenery in the opening of the feveral feals, as it is impossible to give any fatisfying reason for the termination of this feal before the end of time: the Saviour unquestionably carrying on his conquests till then; and

phecy.—And can we fail to observe, that all the effects of the greatest power and policy of this world, are as much in the hand of God, and as much subject to his controul, as the most ordinary occurrences and events. We see the highest aggrandizement of the haughty tyranny of Rome, the person by whom it was to attain that aggrandizement, and the conquests which were to mark its utmost boundary, all distinctly and clearly described as a part

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and indeed the chief of them being represented as refered nearly to that period. I confess I was at first carried away by the smooth tide of opinion. These difficulties, however, soon appeared to obstruct my course. I hesitated, I considered, and at lenth settled in the judgment which I have above delivered. Some time after I was savoured by a friend with Abadie "fur l'ouverture des scaux," with whose scheme I was altogether unacquainted, and had the satisfaction to observe that the same interpretation had been given by that well informed and able writer.

part of the over-ruling providence of God, and which therefore must have been subservient to his vast defigns. We perceive great advantage afforded to the progress of Christianity through that wide extended empire, when the hands of the tyrants were restrained from oppressing it. We fee provision made for the vast enlargement of the church upon the overthrow of paganism, notwithstanding all the diminution which the empire should then have fuffered. And, perhaps, a penetrating eye will be able to difcern, even at this early period, in the comparative facility with which the gofpel might be spread to such a vast extent; fome of the latent causes of the prodigious power of antichrift, when the regal government of Rome was deftroyed, and when those

those kingdoms which had broken off from that unwieldy government gave their power unto the beast. "How unsearchable are thy judgments, O Lord! and thy ways past finding out!"

CHAP. VI.

THE

THE OPENING OF THE SECOND SEAL.

Ver. 3. And when he had opened the the fecond feal, I heard the fecond beaft fay, Come and fee.

> Ver. 4. And there went out another horse that was red; and power was given to him that fat thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great Sword.

Under the first seal, we had occasion to observe the Roman empire raised to the highest pinnacle of its greatness. There is no room to doubt that this feal reprefents the first

first step of its decline. This was to be brought about by war and bloodfhed. Conquest is carried on by the fame means, and yet the emblematical figures which are here exhibited, are very different from the former. The rider is here mounted upon a red borfe, denoting that the horrors of war were to be feen and felt by the Roman people themfelves: he having power to take peace from the earth, that is, from the empire: whereas, in the former cafe, all that they beheld was the rider going forth with the instruments of conquest, and returning with the fair trophies of victory. But now the empire itself is to be the fcene of confusion and bloodshed men killing one another, and therefore there was given unto this rider a great sword.

The description is marked with U verv

very diffinguishing characters, and by attentively observing them we shall probably be led to the objects to which they refer.

The Roman empire, after it had arrived at its full stature by the conquests of Trajan, continued for a confiderable time in a flate of peace and prosperity. This was the case during the fucceeding reigns of Hadrian and the Antonines. It is true that Hadrian yielded up the conquefts which his predeceffor had fo rapidly made. This, however, instead of being any injury to the empire, turned out to its advantage, as it reduced that enormous government to a manageable fize. It is likewife true that in the beginning of the reign of Hadrian, and perhaps before Trajan himfelf had finished his career, violent, and indeed, terrible infurrections of the Tews

Jews had taken place in some of the provinces. These were attended with the flaughter of many thoufands both of themselves and of the Romans, before they were fubdued; and by the horrors which they occasioned, interpreters have very naturally been induced to confider them as the accomplishment of this prophetical representation. But as this people were naturally enemies to the government under which they lived, when their numbers were diminished, and their power wasted, even at a great expence of Roman blood, this, inflead of weakening the force of the empire, ra-

We must therefore look for the symptoms of the diminution of the Roman power and greatness at some after period. These make

ther tended to promote its fecurity

and peace.

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their appearance in very striking colours, in the reign of Commodus, the dissolute fon of Antoninus the philosopher. And in his character and government, and the effects which they produced, we shall, I apprehend, find the true meaning of this emblematical picture realized.

Commodus, by the confent of historians, was one of the most worthless and cruel tyrants that ever difgraced a throne. His debaucheries were feandalous and unbounded; and he fported with the lives of his fubjects, in a manner the most wantonly barbarous. The abhorrence in which he was justy held by his subjects, and especially by all the men of dignity and character in the metropolis, gave occasion to a conspiracy against his life. This exasperated his resentment, ment, and introduced those horrid CHAP. fcenes of cruelty and bloodshed U

which stained the annals of his reign. As he was made to underfland that the plot had originated in the fenate, this inspired him both with hatred and dread of that venerable body, and many persons of eminence fell a facrifice to his revenge. "Suspicion", to use the words of Mr. Gibbon, "was equivalent to proof, trial to condemnation. The execution of a confiderable fenator was attended with the death of all who might lament and revenge his fate; and when Commodus had once tasted human blood, he became incapable of pity or remorfe."

Amidst the general discontent which was excited by his intolerable tyranny and rapacity, the nerves of discipline were relaxed.

A dif-

A distant province, observing the weakness of government, demanded the death of one minister: an enraged populace exacted the head of another. Defertion prevailed among the troops: the deferters betook themselves to robbery; and Maternus, though only a private foldier, collecting these banditti into an army, plundered the rich provinces of Gaul and Spain, marched his troops into Italy, and formed the daring refolution of killing the Emperor and mounting the vacant throne. This he would probably have affected, had not the infidelity of an accomplice ruined the defign.

Under the wretched government then of the cruel and brutish Commodus, we discover the commencement of the decline of the Roman greatness. He is fitly represented as taking peace from the earth, by provoking

voking the people to infurrection CHAP. and revolt; and when we confider his enormous strength, and the infamous profession of a gladiator, in which he delighted, it cannot but strike us with the utmost propriety, that there was given unto him a great Sword.

After all, however, he is to be understood only as the introducer of that state of things in the empire, of which internal diforder and rapine and bloodshed, were the distinguishing characters. These preyed upon the vitals of the Roman power, and prepared the way for its approaching fall; and this state of things, as we learn from the fubfequent history, continued almost without intermission, till the time of Alexander, a period of not less than 42 years.

The spirit of prophecy passes over in

in filence the excellent administration of Pertinax, because his reign continued only for a few months. After he had fallen a facrifice to his love of order, a circumstance the most humiliating immediately occurred. The empire was publicly fet up to fale by the foldiers, and was actually disposed of to the highest bidder. Didius Julianus, raised to the imperial throne in this difhonourable way, might have eafily anticipated the contempt in which he must have been held, both by the people and the foldiers. bore their reproaches with a degree of patience that approached to meannefs. The weaknefs of his government was perceived by all: this was the occasion of great difturbances and bloodshed. Pescennius Niger revolted, and was acknowledged Emperor in the east. About the

the fame time (A: D. 193) Septemius Severus was faluted with the title of Augustus in Illyricum. He marched directly to Rome, and was declared Emperor by the senate. These ambitious officers made the empire a scene of blood. A cruel war immediately ensued, Niger was

totally overthrown; but not till after these terrible battles, in the last of which twenty thousand men are said to have been slain upon the

fide of Niger alone.

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But Severus feems still to have been under apprehensions from another distinguished character. Clodius Albinus was at that time governor of Britain. He was as much the favourite of the senate, as Severus by his cruelty had made himfelf the object of their abhorrence. He had got himself declared Emperor in that province. From thence

he passed into Gaul, where he was opposed by Severus with a great army. A battle was fought upon the plains of Lyons, one of the most fierce and bloody recorded in hiftory; in which, though with the utmost danger to himself, Severus overcame and flew his rival. Thus, till he was firmly established upon the throne, the empire was a scene of difcord and flaughter. Indeed the whole of Severus's reign is marked with cruelty and blood. Upwards of forty fenators, in the course of a few days, fell a facrifice to his jealoufy or revenge; and at another period a confiderable number more; besides a great body of people of an inferior rank.

His fon Caracalla, who fucceedto the empire (A. D. 211,) was diftinguished for nothing but the most horrid oppression and cruelty. He

began

began with the murder of his brother Geta, who was his colleague in the government, and evidently shewed, in a number of shocking instances, that he took pleasure in the miferies, and even in the destruction, of his subjects. But nothing can fet forth his monstrous barbarity in a more dreadful light, than the massacre of the inhabitants of Alexandria. To encrease the horror of the fcene, he had appointed it to be executed in the night. It is fearcely possible to defcribe it in any adequate terms. The city overflowed with blood; the houses were filled with flain; and returning light discovered in every fireet a dreadful spectacle of the devastation which the remorfeless tyrant had produced. But his cruelty was not yet fatiated. Next day he issued out his commands that the flaughter

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flaughter should be renewed, that he might have the pleasure of beholding it from the temple of Serapis in which he was lodged; nor did he put a period to the carnage till he had left only a few of the inhabitants to deplore the unparalleled butchery (a).

During this long feries of oppression and misery the Roman power was gradually diminished; the soldiers became profligate and unmanageable; the government was almost disorganized, and the disorders continued unremedied in the following reigns of Macrinus and Eliagabolus, and received only a temporary check after the death

(a) The only reason that seems to be affigued for this massacre is, that it was in revenge of the satirical severity with which he had been glanced at by the inhabitants of that city, in consequence of the death of Geta.

of the last of those emperors, the most extravagant and the most contemptible of tyrants. CHAP.
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It appears then what reason we have for fixing the commencement of the period of this seal at the beginning of the reign of Commodus in the year 180, and for continuing its duration to the death, or rather the murder, of Eliagabolus, in the year 222 (3).

But

(a) With respect to the meaning and application of this, as of the former seal, there is no great diversity of opinions among the most eminent expositors. Mede understands it of the civil wars in which the empire was involved in the times of Trajan and Hadrian, occasioned by the insurrection of the Jews, and of the dreadful slaughter which they produced. In this opinion he is followed by Goodwin, Fleming, Waple, Lowman, Newton, and likewise by Abbadie, only with this difference, that he restricts those internal commotions to the reign of Hadrian. Durham, follow-

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But let us not turn away our eyes from this melancholy fcene, with-out reflecting on the flriking picture it exhibits of the inflability of worldly greatness. Where were now the splendid conquests of Trajan, so recently and so rapidly made? Those rich

ing the opinion of some foreign divines, understands it of the perfecutions of the church, and applies it to those that took place under Nero and Domitian. The worthy author feems to feel the difficulty in which he is involved in supposing that the church is here called the earth, from which peace was to be taken, and endeavours to extricate himself from it as well as he can. He produces chap. iii. 10. vii. 1. xii. 9. xiii. 14. and xiv. 6. as a proof that the church is in this book fometimes called the earth. This however is so far from being clearly the fense of earth in any of those passages, that, I am asraid, the enquiring reader will be ready to think, that it is attempting to prove one thing by another, which is at least not more certain or evident than itself. fubioin the interpretation of Vitringa, who underffands

rich and extensive territories, which he added as appendages to the magnificence of the Roman empire, had been already resumed by their former lords. Where were now the prosperity and the glory of the times of the Antonines? They were exchanged, alas, for oppression and murders, and for their necessary attendants,

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stands this seal, chiefly, as a prophecy of the Diocletian perfecution. This learned expositor takes no notice of the difficulty which Durham felt, but endeavours to obviate an objection arising from the phrase, that they should kill one another, by denying that it necessarily denotes mutual flaughter, which rarely happens in the case of perfecution, and we are fure did not take place at that time, by quoting Matt. xxiv. 10. and Gal. v. 26. where he thinks it must be differently understood. This however, it will be allowed, is not the most natural sense of the expression, and therefore it is against an interpretation, which at best can only be founded on high probability, when the words must be strained in order to make it out.

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attendants, infurrection and revolt. But this proud and imperious tyranny must be brought low. The God who rules over the kingdoms of the earth had determined it, and we behold the first awful step of its decline marked with the horrors of confusion and of blood.

At the fame time, can we but admire the dignified attitude in which the apostle appears, when delivering these grand and interesting prophecies! Though fuffering under the hand of a wicked tyrant, we fee him looking down with contempt upon his unhallowed domination, and denouncing upon it calamity and judgment. Though carried an exile into a defolate island, and regarded by an overbearing policy as entirely fubjugated to its power, he is raifed to an authority and greatness incomparably

ably above it; and we behold him, CHAP. in this, and fome of the following prophecies, pointing the weapons of the almighty against it for its deftruction. What can be more noble than to fee the despised fisherman of Bethfaida holding the fates of monarchs in his hand, and shewing how He that fitteth in the heavens shall deride them, how he shall vex them in his fore displeasure. " Let God arife and let his enemies be fcattered!"

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THE

THE OPENING OF THE THIRD SEAL.

CHAP. VI. Ver. 5. And when he had opened the third feal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

Ver. 6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Under this feal, we have a fhort period of reformation in the Roman government, which feems to have put a ftop for a little to the progress of its decline, and to have afforded a transient

transient interruption of that dreadful train of calamities with which it was both preceded and followed. The rider here is mounted upon a black horse, the emblem of gravity and fadness; and he has a pair of balances in his band, the emblem of equity and order. There is evidently an intimation of great fcarcity, approaching to famine, at the time of his appearance: but the regulations which he adopts feem to produce moderate plenty. Therefore there is a voice from the midst of the four living creatures, which fays, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny.

It has been much disputed by interpreters, whether this is a description of scarcity, or of plenty. A greek proverb, preserved by Erasmus, has been repeatedly quoted upon the subject, which rather leads

leads to confider it as a description of fcarcity: "Sit not down upon thy (chanix, or) measure." The meafure has been supposed to be fuch a quantity as is fufficient for a man's fustenance for a day; and a Denarius, which we render penny, to be the price of a day's labour. According to this estimate, it must be a description of scarcity; although not fo great a fcarcity as has been commonly understood; for if a man lived upon barley, he would be able to earn three days provifion by one day's labour. It is not however certain that the "chenix" or "meafure" was only fuch a quantity as is here supposed; or that a day's wages was only a "denarius" or penny. The reafon given for this last supposition is, that in our Lord's parable of the labourers in the vineyard, every man is faid to have

have received "a penny" or denarius for his day's work. But it is probable that at the period to which this prophecy refers, when luxury fo much abounded, and when taxes were fo heavily imposed, the price of labour must have been greatly advanced. CHAP. VI.

With respect to the chanix it is by no means certain what quantity it contained. But even supposing it was only a day's fustenance for a man, he would fubfift upon barley almost for a whole week, by two days labour, even at a penny a day. Let us suppose he gained three denarii, or pennies, in two days, which is not unlikely in a flate into which riches had flowed in a very high degree fince our Saviour's time, and two days labour would maintain a man for a week and a third. Let us consider too, that this is the sup-

posed price of the most common and meanest labour, and that all the artizans in the country may be allowed to earn much higher wages, and we shall fee, that this cannot be understood to be descriptive of fcarcity. Upon fuch a supposition, how forced the interpretation of the injunction delivered by the voice, " and fee thou hurt not the oil and the wine," as if this denoted a fcarcity even of those articles likewise (2), contrary to the uniform meaning of the expression, from which it is obvious, that they were not to be injured, but were to be preferved in plenty, fo that a little of these comforts might fometimes fall to the lot even of the poor labourer.

When we put all these circumflances together, we cannot understand

⁽²⁾ See Lowman upon this place.

ftand this to be a description of a time of scarcity: neither do I suppose that it is a description of great abundance. This will be allowed to be as bad for the interests of a state or people as the other. It encourages idleness; it provokes diffipation; and it is well known that disorders in a state are produced equally by wantonness on the one hand, and oppression on the other.

I have only further to observe, that the pair of balances in the hand of this rider, have been very improperly connected by interpreters with the barley and the wheat, as if these commodities were to be weighed out with the most scrupulous exactness, whereas it is evident, they were fold by measure. This emblem is meant to characterize the rider himself, and is no otherwise applicable to the state of provisions than by the

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effects which a just and prudent economy may have upon it.

The proper meaning then of this whole representation is, that the empire had now fallen once more under the management of falutary regulations, resulting from the strictest attention to justice and good order.

Our next enquiry is, where we fhall find an object that fufficiently corresponds to this representation, in that period of history in which we are led to expect it.

It is not a little furprising, that a man of so exact and penetrating a judgement as Mr. Mede, should have directed us chiefly to Septimius Severus as the person in whom this prediction received its accomplishment. But that great interpreter had unluckily fettered himself with the unauthenticated and fanciful opinion,

opinion, that the description of the four living creatures is taken from the standards of the Israelites in the wildernefs. This living creature had the face of a man, which is fupposed to have been the standard of Reuben on the fouth fide of the camp; he was therefore under the necessity of finding some person that came from the fouth to whom he might apply the prediction. The character of Septimius Severus, however, cannot be shadowed forth by this emblematical representation. The leading features of his character were ambition and cruelty; his temper was dark and deceitful; his revenge was unrelenting. Even his fhew of juffice itself degenerated into oppression; and so unfeeling was his avarice that it was not unfrequently gratified by the confifcaCHAP. VI. CHAP.

tion of the property of those whom he had inhumanly murdered.

With refpect to his public conduct, though he made fome falutary regulations for the good of his fubjects, and though his ambition led him to reconquer fome of the provinces which had been loft, even his wars were flained with cruelty; and for feveral years, while he was establishing himself more firmly upon the throne, he filled the metropolis with maffacres. To conclude, he added to all his other enormities, that of perfecuting the church: and, as a striking evidence of his dissolute principles, and of his difregard even to decency itself, he delivered a panegyrick upon Commodus, the most abandoned of mortals, and required him to be ranked among the Gods. It was not furely in the hands of this pagan

pagan emperor, as the above mentioned interpreter supposes, "that the golden balance of justice, let down from heaven, vibrated so magnificently upon the theatre of the world," as to be regarded and celebrated by the Spirit of God in this prophetical representation (*).

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Had he confined his views to Alexander Severus, he would have had much better reason for this opinion. That amiable prince might well be considered as a model of justice, and of many other excellent qualities which he possessed. But it is carefully to be observed, that

⁽a) The words of Mede are beautiful—" En tibi, Lector, equi nigri fessorem, auream illam & ccelitus demissam Justitiæ Trutinam, in theatro orbis terrarum magnisice librantem; quod tam insigne fuit in imperatore pagano, ut ei, in hoc sigillo, spiritum sanctum respexisse, nemini mirum videri debeat.

it is not as a private virtue in his mind, that his love of justice is here to be confidered, but as it was employed to promote his people's good. Though he was only fourteen years of age when he ascended the imperial throne, (A. D. 222) the rectitude of his dispositions, together with the mildness and caution which he discovered, gave the happiest presages of his future reign. He difmissed the ministers of the tyrant Eliagabalus who preceded him: he chose for his counsellors men of the most established character both for probity and wisdom, and immediately began to reform the enormous abuses which had formerly prevailed. His mother, it has been faid, had embraced the Christian faith, and he himself shewed great favour to Christians, protected them from injuries, and had

had them often about his court. He feems not to have been ignorant of Christian morality, and he is faid to have had the highest veneration for that comprehensive and admirable maxim, "Do as you "would be done to."

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Perhaps there is no period of the Roman history, in which the tide of prosperity flowed with fuch an equal current over the whole extent of the empire, than during the reign of this excellent monarch. History scarcely records any thing that may be called calamity belonging to that period. Justice was administered with faithfulness: the military discipline was restored: the fenate recovered its importance and its dignity: fecurity and order were every where established: industry was encouraged: provisions became moderately plenty: public CHAP.

public granaries, which were almost empty at the accession of this prince, were filled at a vast expence; and great quantities of corn and oil were distributed weekly among the poor citizens.

Such was the character of Alexander, and fuch the happiness of the Roman people under his government. The church likewife enjoyed an auspicious calm. The period indeed was not of long duration: It continued only for thirteen years: But it is a period fo remarkably diftinguished for the most important civil benefits, as feems not unworthy the attention of the fpirit of prophecy to describe it; and it forms fuch a striking interval of prosperity in the midst of declining greatness, as exactly corresponds to the interesting train of predictions

predictions which we are now endeavouring to explain (2).

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Let us here contemplate both the goodness and severity of God, and observe how in the midst of wrath he

(a) Expositors have gone into very different opinions respecting both the meaning, and the application of this feal. Several of those who lived foon after the reformation understood it of false teachers, here represented as seated upon a black horfe, denoting, as they thought, the darkness, or blackness, of error, in opposition to the true, who, they think, are represented under the first seal as seated upon a white horse, denoting, the illumination and the purity of the truth: and that the balance here fignifies the balance of deceit. Somewhat allied to this opinion is that of the learned Vitringa, who interprets this feal of a fcarcity of spiritual provisions, the evident consequence of prevailing error. But he explains the balance, of the decisions of councils or general Synods, respecting the doctrines of faith; and applies this prophecy to that period which began with the reign of Constantine, and continued to

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he remembers mercy. Many are the proofs which we have in the history of providence, that this is the

the end of the eighth century. Our own worthy Durham takes up this feal in a more enlarged view, as reprefenting the fad flate of the church after the first two perfecutions, not so much arising from any particular trial, as from the concurrence of feveral; fuch as perfecution, errors, and divifions, by which the church's beauty was greatly marred and obscured. He understands the "balance," of the pretext of legal authority and jufftice, by which perfecution was thus carried on. He explains "the vine and the oil", of the great fundamental and foul-refrething truths of the gofpel, which were to be preferved uninjured amidst all their calamities; and applies the whole to the period which begins with Trajan and ends with Severus. The great objection to these interpretations is, that they spiritualize the very words which are intended to explain the myftical reprefentation without any necessity or warrant. Upon this principle they should understand the words "killing one another" in the fecond feal, of spiritual destruction; and they should explain the manner of his procedure. And were it not for this, the spirit would fail before him, and the souls which A a

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the destroying of men, under the fourth seal, by fword, famine, pestilence, and beasts of the earth, of spiritual mifery occasioned by the wounding of their spiritual interests, by the want of spiritual provision, by their fouls being over-run with spiritual diftempers, and all their spiritual hopes and comforts being overthrown and destroyed. ther, this feal has been understood, by a considerable number, to fignify Famine; among whom are to be ranked, Goodwin and Lowman; the former of whom applies it to the reign of Commodus; the latter, to all the reigns of the Antonines, of Commodus and Severus. On the other hand, feveral eminent expositors understand it rather of plenty than of fcarcity, and confider the character here reprefented, as diffinguished for justice: at the head of these Mede ought to be placed, followed by Waple, Newton and others, who have all therefore been confidered as chargeable with the inconfistency of making a pagan virtue as much celebrated by the Spirit of God as if it had been a Christian grace, and yet

he hath made. Here he had refpect particularly to the interests of his church and people, that they might

at the fame time introducing it among emblems which are all descriptive of calamity and woe. The only person, that I know of, who has adopted this opinion in general, and avoided the apparent inconfiftency, is Abbadie; he confiders it as the character of a particular state of the Roman empire or government, in which (fo far as may be gathered from a fhort hint) he feems to have been followed by Fleming. He thinks this character appears confpicuously in the times of the Antonines and therefore applies this prophecy to them: but he has too much candour not to acknowledge the embarraffment which he feels from the fad injustice and cruelty which the Christians fuffered during that period, in most parts of the empire, when those great cities of Asia, Pergamos, Damascus, Perga, and Apamea, besides many others of inferior note, were covered with the blood of martyrs, and when the Christians fuffered the like distresses both in the northern and fouthern provinces. Finally, I must not omit to mention the very fingular opinion of Dr. Beverly, which feems to have half converted Mr. Waple:

might have a breathing in the midft of the oppressions which they suffered, and might thereby be the better prepared for future trials. In consequence of this likewise the gospel obtained a more free and uninterrupted course, and probably gained a great accession of converts. Finally, even worldly and wicked men themselves might learn from such instances as this, how much they are indebted to the faints for their tranquillity and comfort.—Scenes

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Waple: he understands the horseman to be Christ, and the pair of balances in his hand, to be the balances of the fanctuary, in which he weighs the purity of the church during the whole time of the seals, one half of which, he thinks, beginning in the year 33 runs out with this seal in the year 237; the other half of course extending to the year 437 when he conceives the 1260 years of the apostacy begin.

of diffress and calamity being often interspersed with restraints and mitigations, and sometimes even with a little sunshine of prosperity, on their account.

THE OPENING OF THE FOURTH SEAL.

Ver. 7. And when he had opened the fourth feal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

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Ver. 8. And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him: and power was given unto them over the sourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The opening of this feal prefents to us a complicated fcene of most awful judgments, which were inflicted all at once upon the Roman people for their enormous wickedness.

nefs. It exhibited a perfon riding forth, whose character we cannot mistake, for his name was Death. He was mounted upon a pale borfe; a colour fuitable to his character and enterprize: and hell, or the grave, followed after him, not merely under the appearance of a receptacle for the dead, as has been thought by fome, but, in all probability, in the form of an allegorical person that was to be active in the general destruction; for power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the fword, and with famine, and with death, that is, with a deadly distemper, and with the beasts of the earth. Here we have, what are called in ancient prophecy, God's four fore judgments all united, war, and pestilence, and famine, and the noifome beaft.

When

When we look into the Roman history, we see this difmal scene begin to open, immediately after the calm and pleafant interval which we have just now been furveying. Then the favage Maximin afcended the imperial throne (A. D. 235.) He gained the purple by affassinating the excellent Alexander, and through the whole of his reign it was drenched in barbarity and flaughter. His monstrous fize, and his almost incredible strength, have been taken notice of by all the hiftorians. But fuch was his intolerable cruelty, that it produced revolts and infurrections which convulfed the empire. The Senate declared him a public enemy: his friends and officers every where were murdered: the two Gordians were acknowledged emperors: and perfons of all ranks at Rome, crowding in vaft

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vast multitudes to the temples, implored the protection of the gods against the fanguinary tyrant; and, as he was now in one of the distant provinces, deprecated his return to the imperial city. The account of these alarming events inspired him with madness. He marched to Italy: but in the mean time one of his officers defeats the troops of the Gordians at Carthage, in an engagement which proved fatal to them both, after they had reigned little more than a month.

Pupienus Maximus and Balbinus were then declared emperors by the Senate. The city was filled with tumult and with blood. War was levied against Maximin, but without much success, till at last his foldiers mutinied against him and murdered both him and his son. The joy of the Romans upon this occasion was

but of short continuance. The Carpi, the Goths, and the Persians, harassed the empire: the new Emperors became jealous of each other, and the prætorian guards rushed forward, and murdered them both.

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During the fucceeding reigns of the third Gordian and Philip, though the general calamity was certainly diminished, the empire was repeatedly visited both with invasion and rebellion, fo that this part of the period can fearcely be confidered as assuming a different type. when we look forward to the reign which immediately followed, we behold the deftroying fword brandished in all its horrors. Decius began his government (A. D. 250) with cruelly perfecuting the Chriftian church. Vast multitudes of Christians were every where dragged to execution and to torment.

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The

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The laws of humanity, and even the inflincts of nature itself, were difregarded, and the Christians again experienced the accomplishment of our Lord's prediction, that a man's foes should be those of his own household. This bloody perfecution however was not of long duration. God provided relief for the Christians, by the irruption of fome of the barbarous nations into the provinces, which turned the attention of the emperor and of his ministers into a different channel. These were at length repulsed by the Emperor, but not till they had enurely cut off the army under his fon, plundered Thrace, and, it is fild, killed about a hundred thoufond of the inhabitants.

The next Emperor, Gallus, followed the example of his predeceffor in perfecuting the church. At the

the fame time a dreadful plague CHAP. broke out in the Upper Egypt, and, fpreading with rapidity over the provinces and the empire, fwept away a prodigious multitude of people, especially at Rome, where it is faid to have raged with uncommon violence. The fame year, (for Gallus reigned only a year and a half,) was remarkable for a fevere and general drought, which was followed with a great famine; while the irruption of the barbarous nations from without, and civil difcord within, added to the calamities of a wretched people.

Pailing over the three months of the reign of Æmilian, we come to that of Valerian, and his fon and fuccessor Gallienus, which were one continued fcene of confusion and calamity. The Christians at that time were perfecuted with as great violence

violence as in the reign of Decius, and the empire itself was greatly afflicted. The Franks, a people hitherto unknown in history, plundered and impoverished the opulent country of Spain; and, passing into Africa, aftonished the distant province of Mauritania with their fury. The Suevi, or Alemanni, made an incursion into Gaul, penetrated into Italy, and advanced as far as Ravenna, pillaging the country and putting the inhabitants to the fword. The Goths conquered the Bosphorus, and, having acquired a naval force, ravaged the Afiatic provinces; in repeated expeditions they deftroyed feveral cities, murdered many of the inhabitants. annihilated the poor remains of ancient Troy, profaned every thing facred, and pillaged and burnt the temple of Ephefus, the glory of Afia

Asia for its magnificence and its CHAP. riches: then passing into Greece, they burnt Athens, Corinth, Sparta, and Argos, and produced defolation and ruin through the whole extent of Achaia. The Persians likewise over-ran and laid waste the eastern provinces in both these reigns; and though, afterwards, they were checked in their progrefs, it was not till they had defeated the Roman army which marched to oppose them, and till the Emperor Valerian was made prisoner by the Persian monarch, who subjected him to many humiliating indignities, and left him to languish away his life in hopeless captivity.

Soon after the captivity of Valerian, the most alarming troubles raged at Alexandria; the city became a field of blood and carnage, and the bodies of the flain are faid

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to have refifted the waters of the Nile in their courfe. The war was attended with famine, and the famine was followed by a plague.

Besides the wars and tumults which have been mentioned, the empire was at the fame time afflicted with other dreadful calamities. An awful and portentous darkness overspread the heavens for several days; a tremendous noife, like that of thunder, was heard, not in the air, but in the bowels of the earth; the earth opened in feveral places, and fwallowed up great numbers of people with the houses in which they dwelt; the fea burft in upon the continent, and produced the most threatening devastation; and besides, the plague raged with great violence in Greece, and in Egypt, and over all the empire, but chiefly at Rome, where

where it fwept off, for fome time, five thousand persons every day.

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The author of the history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire, while he affects to discredit fome of the alarming tokens of the just judgement of Heaven which have now been recited, gives an account of this period, fufficiently flriking, at once to verify and appropriate, the prophetical description which we are now confidering. The passage is too remarkable not to be inferted at length. ' Our habits of thinking," fays he, " fo fondly connect the order of the universe with the fate of man, that this gloomy period of history has been decorated with inundations, earthquakes, uncommon meteors, preternatural darkness, and a crowd of prodigies fictitious or exaggerated. But a long and general famine was a calamity

calamity of a more ferious kind. It was the inevitable confequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the prefent, and the hope of future harvests. Famine is almost always followed by epidemical difeases, the effects of fcarcity and unwholesome food. Other causes must however have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the year 250, to the year 265, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family of the Roman empire. During fome time 5000 persons died daily in Rome, and many towns that had escaped the hands of the barbarians were entirely depopulated.

"We have the knowledge of a very curious circumstance, of some use perhaps in the melancholy calculation of human calamities. An

exact register was kept at Alexandria, of all the citizens entitled to receive the distribution of corn. It was found, that the ancient number of those comprised between the ages of forty and feventy had been equal to the whole fum of claimants, from fourteen to fourfcore years of age, who remained alive after the reign of Gallienus. Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves, that above half the people of Alexandria had perished; and could we venture to extend the analogy to the other provinces, we might suspect that war, pestilence, and famine, had confumed, in a tew years, the moiety of the human fpecies *."

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C c Such

^{*} Gibbon, v 1. ch, x. Sub fin.

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Such then are the characters of this fad and eventful period: famine, peftilence, and war, raging with uncommon and continued violence: characters that fo exactly, and fo awfully, correspond to the prophetical description, as to leave the mind almost without a doubt, that this was the period to which it referred; especially when we add, what is by no means improbable, and what appears likewife to have been matter of fact, that fierce and ravenous animals, feeling themselves undifturbed, in confequence of the depopulation of the country, multiplied apace, and at length, emboldened by their number and compelled by want, entered even into villages and towns, and destroyed the inhabitants. There is still one other calamitous circumstance to be fubjoined to this detail; that in the

the reign of Gallienus, the empire was torn by usurpation; no less than thirty tyrants (a) being said to have started up at once, who all came to a miserable end, as did likewise that whole list of emperors which we have been recounting.

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The period of this feal may be considered as terminating with the murder of Gallienus; these scenes of horror being in a great measure removed during the subsequent reigns, till the time of Diocletian. It therefore fills up the term of 46 years, beginning in the year 222, and ending in the year 268 (b).

Dreadful is the fituation of a people when their enormities have drawn

⁽a) Gibbon maintains that they were only nineteen.

⁽b) It is unneceffary to narrate the opinion of Mr. Mede respecting the import and the accomplishment

drawn down the judgements of God upon them. In fuch a cafe, all the power and policy of this world can bring no relief; and even the greatest empires upon earth are as weak and defenceless as the meanest creature that crawls upon the ground.

plishment of this seal, as it corresponds in general with that which I have above delivered; only he inclines to understand the beasts of the earth, of the thirty tyrants, who were the inftruments of those judgments, and who raged like favage beafts in the empire. He grounds this interpretation upon the change of the conftruction here; but John often changes the construction without thanging the meaning. The learned reader will find a remarkable inftance of this kind, chap. xviii. 12. Lowman understands, and applies this feal in the fame way with Mede, but he extends it from they ear 211, to the year 275: while Abbadie extends it from the beginning of the reign of Commodus in the year 180, to the perfecution by Diocletian in the year 303, and explains the

name

ground. In this melancholy hiftory, we perceive, how various are the means by which the vengeance of heaven may be inflicted; and when this vengeance is once exerted, the time cannot be distant when the CHAP. VI.

name Death of him that fat upon the horse, to denote that the throne of the empire, during that period, would be a deadly throne to those who fat upon it. Durham understands this feal, of the perfecution of the church under Diocletian But it must be difficult to give a distinct and proper meaning to famine, and especially to pestilence upon this interpretation, because this last, at least, is a judgement immediately from God. David knew this distinction well, when he choosed the pestilence, and probably even famine, in preference to the fword, faying, "let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hands of man. So the Lord fent a pestilence upon Israel." It is not very fatisfying to expound them in a general way, as this worthy interpreter does, of the greatest depth

the dominion of the proud shall be destroyed.

But we observe here, as in other cases, that the judgements of God tend only to blind the minds, and to harden the hearts of the impenitent. That devoted people whose

depth of affliction in which the church is involved, and to affert that any one of these having been found to fignify affliction or perfecution to the church, the fame thing must be understood of all. I shall only subjoin the interpretation of Vitringa, who following the opinion of fome divines about the time of the reformation, understands this seal to prefigure the Saracens, and the Turks, by whom God brought a fevere fcourge upon the Christians, for their gross and shameful corruption. He takes the rider to be the angel of death, and the business which is here affigned him, both in his nature and extent, comports well with the miferies which have been produced by those deluded and daring people. He observes from Leuenclavius, that the whole of their law and religion

whose history we have been surveying, considered the christians as the
cause of their calamities. They
thought the indulgence granted to
them increased the anger of their
gods; and therefore they pointed
their resentment and enmity the
more against them. This however
only

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ligion is fanguinary, and therefore they have brought blood and flaughter wherever they have come; they have laid waste the finest countries, and made them deserts for wild beasts, in consequence of which famine and pestilence have frequently ensued. He observes that this calamity happened towards the end of the period which he allots to the preceding seal: for Mahometanism, which began in the time of Heraclius, had increased by the time when the dissentions of the Monothelites were lighted up. Afterwards the Turks, bursting forth from Tartary by the gates of Caucasus, first shewed themselves in Asia in that very age in which the Christians in the east were contending shercely about images.

only baftened the overthrow which they were foon to meet with. "How terrible art thou in thy works, O God! at thy rebuke the fons of the mighty are aftonished. Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry!"

THE

THE OPENING OF THE FIFTH SEAL.

Ver. 9. And when he had opened the fifth feal, I faw under the altar the fouls of them that were flain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

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Ver. 10. And they cried with a loud voice, faying, How long, O Lord, holy, and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!

Ver. 11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was faid unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their sellow-servants and their brethren that should be killed, as they were, should be fulfilled.

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The great intent of this prophetical reprefentation is obvious and plain It denotes a time of fevere and unrelenting perfecution by the most palpable and striking images. In this character of atrocity and horror, is the heathen Roman empire here exhibited, flretching forth its hand against the church, and thereby filling up the measure of its iniquity to its destruction. The prophecy feems to intimate, that this haughty, perfecuting power, had been permitted long to exercife its cruelties upon the church. This is probably the emphasis of the expression uttered by these bleeding fpirits, O Lord, how long. Difficulties arife however about the circumstances of the vision. The fouls of the martyrs are reprefented as lying under the altar. But what are we to underfland by these souls lying under the altar?

altar? Are we to understand them CHAP. of their bodies, as fome interpreters contend? Most certainly this is not the meaning: for the bodies of the beafts that were flain of old, lay upon the altar, not under it. But the blood, when they were killed, flowed down beneath the altar; and let it be observed, that the blood was confidered as the life or foul of the animal. John, therefore, in this vision, beheld the life, or the foul, rifing up again at the foot of the altar, and crying for vengeance.

But how are we to understand this as being feen in heaven? The altar of burnt-offering was without the fanctuary, and therefore cannot confishently be placed in heaven; nor can fouls be reprefented there as of a vindictive disposition. answer to this, I would observe, that

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it appears by various passages in this book, that the heaven, into which the apostle was taken up, had the whole temple and all its furniture standing in it: and as these souls, pleading for vengeance, must be understood in a figurative fense upon every scheme, there cannot, one should think, be any impropriety, nay, rather there is a particular beauty and energy, in understanding this as a strong intimation that the justice of their cause called loudly for vengeance, and should certainly obtain it White robes being given them, denotes the triumphant and glorious issue of their unjust and cruel sufferings: and their being commanded to rest for a little feafon, fignifies, that notwithflanding the justice of their cause dra ving judgements after it, yet its agency was to cease, as it were, or

to be fuspended, for a little, till their fellow-servants, and their brethren, who were to be killed, as they were, should be fulfilled.

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The period of history to which this prophecy belongs may be determined with confiderable eafe and certainty. It must be remarkable both for the feverity, and for the duration of the perfecution which takes place under it; and we are to look for it, according to the order of these prophecies, after the complicated calamities that have been already described, and before that aftonishing revolution which the opening of the next feal so awfully displays. In the reign of Diocletian, then, it has commonly been fupposed, we meet with a perfecution, which, both for its feverity and for its duration, is fully adequate to what we are here led to expect. Let

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us take a view of this melancholy fcene, although perhaps it will appear, that, awful as the fpectacle is which it prefents, it does not come up to the full import of this prophetical reprefentation.

Soon after Diocletian was raifed to the imperial throne, he assumed Maximian as his fellow-Emperor, and fhared equally with him the authority and the glory of the government. About ten years afterwards, when the empire was preffed by furrounding enemies, the two emperors adopted Galerius and Conftantius Chlorus as Cæfars, vefted with proconfular power, and who should succeed them in the empire. Of these, the former was an inveterate enemy of the Christians, and at last stirred up Diocletian to endeavour by the most violent perfecution to deftroy them. This perfecution

fecution began in the year 303, and continued, with relentless fury, through the long period of ten fucceeding years. Christians of all ranks were dragged to punishment. The cruelty of their perfecutors respected neither the blooming beauty of youth, nor the infirmities of advanced age. But while it was marked with the most unfeeling violence, it had the calmness to confider by what means it might best prolong and multiply the agonies of its victims. The followers of the Saviour, therefore, were not merely beheaded, or cast into the sea, or killed with the fword; they were crucified, they were fcourged to death, their limbs were drawn a funder, and their flesh at intervals was torn with pincers from their bones: not to mention various other methods of torture, too shock-

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ing, and formetimes too indecent, to be described.

It is impossible to reckon up the number of Christians who suffered under this dreadful perfecution. But if we confider, that it extended almost over the whole Roman empue, not excepting even Britain itfelt, and that it has been computed that more than 200,000 perished by it in Egypt alone, we thall be anonithed at the immentity of the number, which, upon the most moderate calculation, must be supposed. Indeed it appears to have had for its object the total extermination of the Christian name: and it was profecuted with unwearied ailiduay till the defign was thought to be completed.

Such then was the violence, and such the extent, of this tremendous and long continued perfecution:

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and is it not natural to suppose, that a period, at once so calamitous to the church, and so ruinous to the empire itself, should be particularly taken notice of in this series of predictions.

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But I cannot perfuade myfelf, that the fpirit of prophecy confines his views to this melancholy period, in the affecting reprefentation that is now before us. We have feen the vengeance of Heaven poured out repeatedly upon the empire, under some of the foregoing seals, in a variety of terrible judgements with which it was visited. It is not a little remarkable, however, that not the fmallest hint has been given of the cause of these judge-But we cannot hesitate to ments. afcribe them to its enormous wickedness, and particularly, to its opposition to Christianity, and

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its perfecuting the church. We have undoubted evidence, from hiftory, that this was its character in former periods. In many of the preceding reigns, the Christians were treated with great injuffice and cruelty, as well as in the prefent. This was the case under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, and even the Antonines themselves. It was likewife the cafe under Severus, Maximin, Decius, and Valerian. In those reigns, vast multitudes of Christians were ruined in their substance, were banished, imprisoned, and put to death. But in none of them, were they driven to fuch extremity of fuffering as in the reign of Decius; the perfecution under whom, though fhort in its continuance, fcarcely yielded in feverity to that which was raifed by Diocletian. The perfecution under Valerian did

not wear a much milder afpect. And now, when the church was again plunged into the depths of tribulation, and was fubjected anew to all those horrible cruelties which fhe had already fo often and fo long experienced; what can be more natural, than for those holy martyrs, who were flain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, to be reprefented as crying, and as crying even with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

I cannot help thinking therefore,

flictions from her heathen enemies, he hath respect, likewise, to all that succession of sufferings which she

that, though the spirit of prophecy feems to point directly at this period, in which the church was filling up that which remained of her af-

had

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had formerly endured. Upon this ground alone we can perceive, not only the propriety, but likewife, the affecting energy of that part of the martyrs' expostulation, O Lord! bow long—

It may be faid indeed, that, by fuppoling the cry of these martyrs to be uttered only towards the close of this perfecution, after it had carried on its ravages almost for ten years, we may see the propriety of the expression in a light sufficiently striking. But it ought to be considered, that this deftroys the meaning of the answer which they received, when it was faid, that they should rest for a little season. Upon this fupposition, there was no season remaining, till judgement was to be executed upon their enemies. That period, fo fatal to them, and fo joyful to the faints, was then certainly

at hand. Then their heathen per- CHAP. fecutors were to be cast down from their feats. Then the power was to be wrested out of their hands. They were to be degraded and overthrown; many of them were to fuffer great calamities and judgements; and the Christians, whom they abhorred, were to triumph over them.

But, if we understand the cry to have been uttered at the commencement of this perfecution, every circumstance will be clear and confistent. It was certainly upon their heathen enemies that the vengeance was to be taken. It was from them that they had fuffered fo many cruelties; and to none but them could they be supposed to refer, when they requested that they might be avenged on those that dwelt on the earth. But this vengeance was still at the distance

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distance of ten years of affliction; during which their fellow-fervants and brethren, who were to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled; and that period may with great propriety be called a little feason, in comparison of all that length of time to which it is here evidently opposed, in which oppression and calamity had been their general lot.

Can we fail to admire then the wifdom of inspiration, that, while with one hand, as it were, it points directly at this awful period, the most distressing to the church that had hitherto appeared, with the other, it directs us to all those long continued sufferings which their heathen perfecutors had formerly inslicted upon them. In this way, it informs us what was the general state of the church under that haughty

haughty tyranny of Rome. It explains the cause of those terrible judgements which had already been poured down upon the empire; and shews, that the time for the deliverance of the saints was at no great distance. All this is done, in the most simple and admirable manner, by the single expression, O Lord, how long— and by intimating that they were to rest yet for a little season.

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What a shocking picture does this prophecy exhibit of the deep depravity of the human heart; that a doctrine so sublime and so benevolent as that which Christianity teaches, should be regarded with enmity and abhorrence; and that its humble and harmless votaries, breathing nothing but peace and love to men, should be so unjustly and cruelly treated. This however is only an evidence of what the scripture

feripture has declared, that the carnal mind is enmity against God: and, though it may feem strange to some, and perhaps unaccountable, that God should permit the wicked to make fuch ravages upon his church and people; yet he has wife and holy ends to answer by it. It is for the trial and triumph of their faith, that it may be found ever to praife, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jefus Christ. It is likewife for the conviction of an unbelieving world, by shewing what the power of almighty grace can do. Who but must have been struck with the constancy of those holy martyrs, when they appeared rifing superior to all their sufferings, and shewing a fortitude, even in the most excruciating deaths, beyond that of the most celebrated heroes! who could but admire their amiable and

and elevated spirit, when viewing them in those awful moments, wrapt up in the praises of God, and recommending the religion for which they fuffered, in the most earneft manner, to all around them, as of the last importance to their eternal interests! Such an astonishing phænomenon must have been well adapted to make men enquire into its cause; and in consequence of this, there is every reason to suppose, that they would feel themfelves convinced and perfuaded of the truth. Indeed the frequent and fevere perfecutions which took place after miracles had ceased, seem to have been intended as a fuccedaneum to them; and experience has amply shewn, that they have been the means of gaining many converts to Christianity. Well might it be faid then, that the blood of Ff the

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the martyrs was the feed of the church. Every drop of that precious blood that was unjustly and cruelly flied, may be confidered as a grain of corn cast into the ground, and ready to fpring up into an abundant harvest -But deplorable is the flate of those who are given up to the commission of such atrocious wickedness: the blood of the faints calls loudly for vengeance on them; and, in the train of those predictions, we have occasion repeatedly to observe this vengeance executed in an exemplary and awful manner. It may indeed be delayed for a little, but it shall certainly at length overtake the wicked; for the Lord knoweth how to referve the unjust to the day of judgement to be punished (1).

⁽a) The ingenious and learned Mede fixes the commencement

commencement of this feal to the year 268, when the fifteen years pestilence was over; and carries it down to the end of the Diocletian perfecution. He understands the martyrs being required to rest for a little feafon, to intimate, that their cause was not to be avenged till the total overthrow of the empire under the trumpets. This, according to him, was accomplished in the year 542. But how 240 years should be called a little feafon, in comparison of the former, to which it is nearly equal, it is not very eafy to conceive. This objection is greatly increased by the interpretation of Waple, who lengthens out the little feafon, till the time of God's last vengeance upon antichrift, under the Vials. Durham understands this feal, as expressing no new matter at all, and as taking up no length of time; but as added to the former by way of explanation and comfort, in reference to the fufferings of the faints under them. But it would certainly require very ftrong reasons to prove, contrary to the uniform character of all the other feals, and even of the trumpets and vials which fucceed them, that this produced no new matter, and took up no time. This is a point, however, that the worthy author entirely passes over. Abbadie, while he interprets the vision of the perfecution under Diocletian,

differs from most expositors. He, indeed, understands the fouls of the martyrs here, of their dead bodies, as fome had done before him; but he ingeniously contends, that the white robes being given them, intimates the impression of their innocence which was made upon the mind of Constantius; and that their being ordered to rest for a little season, denotes the abatement of the perfecution, from the refignation of Diocletian and Maximian, when the empire was divided betwixt Conftantius and Galerius, till the last victory of Constantine over Licinius, when palms were put into the hands of Christians, in addition to their white robes, as an emblem, not only of their innocence, but of their triumph. But how it could be faid to the martyrs in general that they were to rest, in the sense of this interpreter, while the perfecution was ftill going on with as much violence as ever, in one half of the empire at least, and only abated in the other, does not In order to have repdered this interpretation confistent, it would have been necessary to have shewn, that this prospect of rest was only intimated to the martyrs in the western parts of the empire. I conclude with the opinion of the learned Vitringa, who understands this prophecy, of the perfecutions of the Waldenses and Albigenses Albigenses, the Bohemian brethren, and the martyrs of the reformed church: the white robes, of God's vindicating the cause of these martyrs at the time of the reformation; and their resling for a little season, of their waiting with patience till that period.

THE

THE OPENING OF THE SIXTH SEAL.

CHAP. VI. Ver. 12. And I beheld when he had opened the fixth feal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the fun became as black as fackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood:

Ver. 13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

Ver. 14. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Ver. 15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men,

and every bond-man and every free-man, bid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; CHAP.

Ver. 16. And faid to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne; and from the wrath of the Lamb;

Ver. 17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand!

The opening of this feal far exceeds that of any of the former, in the awful magnificence and fublimity of the description; a greater and more terrible event, therefore, must certainly be meant, than any that has hitherto been predicted. This indeed is so remarkably the case, that, did not the circumstances of the prophecy forbid the interpretation, we should naturally understand it of the dissolution of the world, and

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CHAP. and the end of all things. There was a great earthquake; the fun was darkened, and the moon put on the appearance of blood, the stars of beaven likewise fell to the earth. These appear to have been the effects of the earthquake, particularly the last, the convulsion being so great, that the flars themselves feemed to be violently toffed and shaken, as a fig-tree is shaken by a mighty wind: at last the heavenly canopy itself was removed and withdrawn, as a feroll when it is rolled together. Every mountain and island likewise were moved out of their places; and the wicked, great and fmall, were filled with horror, as if the judgement were at hand. They cried to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that fitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for 1be

the great day of his wrath is come, and CHAP. who shall be able to stand! It is certain however, that it cannot refer to the diffolution of the world, or the end of all things; for another feal remains to be opened, disclosing posterior events respecting the church, before that period arrives. Nor is it necessary fo to understand the defcription, as every one who is acquainted with prophetic language, must be fenfible. An carthquake, according to that language, fignifies the shaking and overturning of a politital conflitution and government: the fun being darkened, and the moon turned into blood, denote distress and calamity to the rulers of the world: the stars of heaven falling to the earth, denotes, that the teachers of religion, especially those posfeffing political power and influence, are thrown from their sta-Gg tions:

tions: the heaven departing as a feroll rolled up, denotes an entire change in the political or religious fystem: and so of the other circumstances that are mentioned. In the regular feries of these seals then, we are come to an event of great importance and magnitude, and in which many of the striking figures here made use of, may feem to receive their accomplishment. mean the overthrow of Rome pagan, and the introduction of Rome christian, in the time of Constantine the Great. This was a time of great difaster and calamity to the heathen rulers. Maxentius, who had usurped the imperial dignity, in fighting against Constantine, was drowned in the Tiber, with many of his men and fome of his chief officers: his head was next day fevered from his body, which had been

been found funk in the mud, a hu- CHAP. miliating spectacle; and when Constantine made his public entry into Rome, he caused the head to be carried upon a pole before his army, to convince the people that the tyrant was dead, as they durft not express their rejoicing till that event was fully afcertained. Maximin, likewife, who reigned in the eaft, being defeated in battle at Heraclea by Licinius, threw off his purple robes, and croffing the Bosphorus, fled in the difguise of a flave to Nicomedia: thence, taking his wife and children along with him, and ftill purfued by Licinius, he continued his flight through Cappadocia till he reached Tarsus, where, in a fit of dispair, he put an end to his life by poison. After his death, his children and relations were publicly executed, his wife was drowned

CHAP. in the river Orontes, and all his ministers and favourites shared in his ruin. At Antioch, Theotechnes a celebrated magician, and all his affociates were publicly put to death, after being obliged to difcover the impostures with which they had deceived the people, and stirred them up against the Christians. Candidianus, the fon of Galerius, was murdered by order of Licinius. Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian, and widow of Galerius, hearing of his death, fled from Antioch with her mother Prifca, and wandered about in difguise for fifteen months: they were at length difcovered at Thessalonica, and being apprehended, they were immediately beheaded, and their bodies thrown into the fea. In this remarkable and awful manner, were the families of those three cruel perfecutors of the church,

church, Diocletian, Galerius and Maximin, utterly cut off and deftroyed.



Constantine likewise shut up the heathen temples, stripped them of their riches, their ornaments, and even of their idols; and ordered all the revenues belonging to them to be applied to useful purposes in civil life; in consequence of which, not only were the heathen priests ruined, but the gods themselves, the Pythian, and Sminthian Apollo, the mighty Pan, which, after the Perfian war, all the cities of Greece had confecrated, with the Tripod of Delphos, and whatever blind antiquity had for ages worshipped, were dragged publicly about the fireets, and either dashed in pieces, or preferved merely as elegant productions of art to adorn the palaces and public buildings. Thus, the pagan

CHAP. VI. pagan heaven itself might be faid to have departed, and its luminaries to have fallen to the earth. The enemies of the church too, we have feen, and even those of higheft rank and authority, fuffered awful difasters and calamities; to which the fun becoming black as fackcloth of hair, and the moon being turned into blood, may be fupposed to refer. I am inclined however to think, that, though the prophecy certainly points to this event, it has not in it its full accomplishment: it feems to look forward from the destruction of Rome pagan, to the parallel and much greater event, the destruction of Rome papal, in which Christianity itself had been paganized; and in this fingle prediction, I imagine it describes them both. The fmiting and darkening of the heavenly bodies,

dies, in the language of prophecy, denotes the fall of kingdoms and empires: now there was no fuch fall happened when Rome became Christian. The civil government continued the same as before; and, though, upon that occasion, many great men fuffered, as we have feen, as well as many of inferior rank, yet there is nothing in the history that can lead us to suppose that they imputed their fufferings to the wrath of the Lamb. On the contrary, this happened in the common course of war; and they feem rather to have imputed them to the anger of their gods, for their neglecting to pay them their accustomed homage. But at the destruction of Rome papal, all these magnificent and awful figures receive their full accomplishment. Then the state of things, both civil and ecclefiaftical, is entirely

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tirely changed: this agrees exactly to the great earthquake, and to the fmiting and destroying of the heavenly bodies, and to the whole political heavens being removed. Then too, as we have every reason to suppofe, persons of every rank and description shall be filled with terror and despair, on account of the awful judgements which will come upon them; and the prophetic language will be found by no means too strong, when it represents the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man and free-man, as faying to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Then they cannot but know that their calamities proceed from this fource.

The

The fimiliarity of the descriptions likewife, chap. vi. 12. and xvi. 18. the last of which unquestionably foretels the fall of Rome antichriftian, is very remarkable. In both cases there was a great earthquake, though the last was greater than the first, the civil as well as the religious fystem being then quite overturned; in both cases the mountains and the islands are represented as removed, places of fecurity and refuge for the wicked being taken away; which will be far more remarkable in the latter case than it was in the former. It is true that in the first, the wicked are reprefented faying to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from him that fitteth on the throne; in the last, they are faid to blaspheme God, because of the plague of the hail: but these are by no means inconsist-

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ent with one another: the devils in the place of torment, which is a place of horror and defpair, do not refrain from blaspheming God.

Such then is the fense in which I understand this remarkable paffage. It is precifely in the spirit of the double fense of prophecy, as every one who has fludied that fubject must be sensible, where the secondary meaning, is often the full and adequate accomplishment. It preferves the feries of predictions, by understanding it at first of the fall of Rome pagan; while, by fuppofing the spirit of prophecy to look forward to the parallel and more awful event, it gives the expressions their full and adequate import, which when they are refricted to the former, cannot exactly be made out. There feems likewife to be a particular propriety, when the rife

of that corrupt perfecuting power is about to be described, in giving the church the confolation of an anticipating prospect of his fall (a).

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(a) Mede, Durham, Jurieu, Lowman, and others, understand this feal only of the change of religion in the Roman empire, under Constantine the Great, which, we have feen, does not come up to the full fignificance of the emblems which are here employed. While the learned Vitringa understands it entirely of the destruction of papal tyranny and superstition, which is yet future; and thus, without a forced interpretation of the former feals turning them away from their natural objects, the feries of predictions is broken, and the fixth feal made to stand at a vast distance from all the rest. Forbefius, again, understands it to be a description of the calamities brought upon the Roman empire, by the irruptions of the barbarous nations, the Goths, Vandals, Alans, Perfians, Hunns, &c. not confidering that the judgement would then fall upon the feat of the church, whereas, according cording to this prophecy, it must have been upon her enemies, who are here represented as terrified at the wrath of the Lamb. Markius understands it of the judgement of the great day; the reasons against which have been formerly stated.

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Ver. 1. And after these things, I saw CHAP. four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Ver. 2. And I faw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to burt the earth and the Sea;

Ver. 3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the fea, nor the trees, till we have fealed the servants of God in their forcbeads.

This

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This vision, every one must see, is of quite a different character from any of the former: it is interposed between the opening of the fixth and the feventh feal, and therefore we must look for its accomplishment at that period. It prefages a time of fevere trial and danger to the fervants of God; intimated by the four winds being let loofe to burt the earth, and the fea, and the trees: at the fame time it holds out a divine fecurity which the faints shall enjoy in the midst of all this danger; denoted by their being fealed in their foreheads with the feal of the living God; and, what is very important and remarkable, these destructive winds are not allowed to blow till this divine fecurity is given. It is of little confequence to enquire who these four angels are: they are plainly the ministers

ministers of providence to restrain, for a time, the evils that were coming upon the world. It is of more importance to know who that other angel is, who is spoken of as ascending from the east, and having the feal of the living God. He must certainly be understood to be a divine person, from his office of fealing the elect, which supposes the knowledge of the heart; and who elfe can he be but our Lord and Saviour himself? He is often reprefented in Scripture as an angel; and may properly be faid here to escend from the east, as he took his rise in Judea, which lay east of the fcene of this vision: and though the office of fealing the faints is affigned in fcripture to the Holy Spirit, whom the learned Vitringa understands to be the angel here, yet, the Father himself is likewise faid

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faid to feal them (a), and therefore there is no reason why the Son may not feal them also. Besides, the fealing of the Spirit, as it is inward upon the heart, is here supposed to be done already, by their being the fervants of God; whereas, this fealing was performed upon their foreheads, and denotes more properly their open and firm profession of pure Christianity, in the midst of the greatest dangers, and their being kept through faith, by the power of God, from the corruptions and pollutions with which they were furrounded.

It remains now to enquire, what is the prophetical import of the blowing of the four winds, and what are the events in which this prophecy is fulfilled. The winds here

⁽a) 2 Cor. i. 27.

here certainly denote calamities, judgements, and evils, and therefore cannot be meant of the doctrines of the gospel, as some underfland them; on the contrary, we are here led to expect great commotions and dangers. When the four winds are let loofe at once to ftruggle with one another, what dreadful confusion do they produce! Here the claffical reader will readily recollect Virgil's description of the storm which scattered Æneas's fleet, and destroyed so great a part of it (a). But the question still remains T i what

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(a) Venti, velut agmine facto,
Qua data porta, ruunt, et terras turbine persiant.
Incubuere mari, totumque a sedibus imis
Una Eurusque Notusque ruunt, creberque procellis
Africus, et vastos voloent ad sidera, sluctus.
Eripiunt subito nubes cælumque diemque
Teucrorum ex oculis: ponto nox incubat atra:
Intonuere poli, & crebris micat ignibus æther. 1.83.

CHAP. VII. what are the evils which are denoted by those winds, when they were permitted to blow? Are they the errors and herefies with which the church was foon after this rent and convulfed; fuch as the Arian, and Photinian, Apollinarian and Macedonian herefies? Or, are they the whole of the calamities which occurred through the whole of the Papal tyranny and fuperstition? Indeed there is every reason to underfland them in this extensive meaning. They were all dangerous and hurtful to the faints; but, amidst them all, the faints were to be kept fare and entire; and accordingly, in the beginning of the xiv. chap. we fee them appearing in full number, flanding with the lamb on mount Sion, having the Father's name written on their foreheads; which must be the same thing with the

the feal here mentioned; for the Jewish seals had no figure, or image engraved on them, but only an infcription or motto; besides the difcoveries of antiquarians, we have a feal with the infcription upon it introduced, 2 Tim. ii. 19. on one fide were these words, " The Lord knoweth them that are his," on the other, " Let every one that nameth the name of Chaift depart from iniquity." There were an hundred and forty and four thousand sealed of all the tribes of Ifrael; a definite number, even the number of perfection, being put for an indefinite one; and the tribes of Ifrael being put for the true Ifrael of God. Among professing Christians, however, vast numbers died during that long period of evil. Thefe, in the tender mercies of God, were translated to the world of bliss and pertection

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CHAP. VII. perfection above. Therefore the apostle records another vision which he saw, for the consolation of the saints.

Ver. 9. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Ver. 10. And cried with a loud voice, faying, Salvation to our God, which fitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Ver. 11. And all the angels flood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beafts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

Ver. 12. Saying, Amen: Bleffing, and glory, and wifdom, and thankfgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

While

While the apostle was thus furveying the vast society of faints and angels in wonderful and delightful contemplation, one of the Elders, wishing to recal his attention to the palm-bearing multitude, asked him, as he tells us, the following questions.

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Ver. 13.—What are thefe which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?.

Ver. 14. And (fays he) I faid unto him, Sir, thou knoweft. And he faid unto me, thefe are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Ver. 15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Ver. 16. They shall bunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the fun light on them, nor any heat.

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Ver. 17. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Though I will not deny that this description may have a reference to the prosperity and glory of the church in the latter day, yet it certainly runs far too high to be ever fully verified in this world. What a poor fense can be put upon these expressions, they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the fun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: What a poor sense, I say, can be put upon these expressions, if we understand them of any thing less than the heavenly

heavenly happiness and glory. It may be faid indeed, that this is the manner in which the prosperous flate of the church is described in the Old Testament prophecies, and therefore, it is not strange that it should be so described in the New. But who can shew that the spirit of prophecy in ancient times did not look beyond the earthly accomplishment, to that fuperior happiness and glory which it will usher in, and describe them both at once? Besides, this representation of the glorious reward of the fufferings of the faints, is fitly introduced here, that they may be supported by the faith of it under their greatest trials, as knowing that the fufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed in them. And finally, when founderstood, it makes the

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the feries of predictions to harmonize: we fee, that notwithstanding this vast multitude exalted to the heavenly mansions, the church on earth still continued; new converts were raised up to fill their room, and preserved in the dark night of apostacy and danger; and when the day of deliverance began to dawn, we see the church appearing in her integrity, even the same one hundred and forty and sour thousand standing upon mount Sion, with the Lamb at their head (a).

(a) Commentators have taken very different views of this chapter, and understood it in very different fenses. Durham understands the prophecy of the winds which it contains, of the errors and herefies which rent and convulsed the church in the fourth century, and not of outward calamities: and he gives this placefible reason for his interpretation, that though faints are to be preserved from spiritual calamities and evils, they

are not to be preferved from those of a temporal nature. But why not admit along with these herefies, the idolatries and pollutions of the church of Rome, from which they were certainly to be preferved? The introduction of image worship, may be fitly represented by winds striving, for it bred great commotions in the church for a considerable time.

The learned Vitringa understands it as part of the fixth feal; and with lefs probability than Durham, he understands the winds to be those great commotions which caused the earthquake; and the fealing of the fervants of God, as denoting their fecurity and prefervation amidst those awful judgements, by which mystical Babylon shall be overthrown. Bishop Newton likewife confiders this vision as a part of the fixth feal, for a different reason, namely, that the feventh feal was not yet opened, as if no discovery could refer to that period till it was opened: he gives no higher meaning to the fealing of the fervants of God, than, that great numbers, both of Jews and Gentiles, were baptised into the Christian faith, and made open profession of the gospel; and he childishly conceives that the fealing on the forehead, refers to

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that corruption of Christian worship, the making the sign of the cross upon the forehead in the administration of baptism in the Romish and English churches, and at what they call confirmation, an ordinance of their own invention.

THE

THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL.

CHAP. VIII.

Ver. 1. And, when he had opened the feventh feal, there was filence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Ver. 2. And I faw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Ver. 3. And another angel came, and flood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Ver.

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Ver. 4. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand.

Ver. 5. And the angel took the cenfer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

It is as great an error to look for too much in the emblems of prophecy, as for too little. The ingenious inventions of Mede, upon this occasion, are too remarkable not to be taken notice of. He finds the prayers of all faints, here spoken of, to be the prayers of the martyrs, under the fifth seal, crying to God for vengeance; and the fire taken from the altar and cast upon the earth, to denote the an-

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fwer to those prayers, in the awful judgements which were to come upon their enemies, under the trumpets. Both thefe, I am afraid, are too fancifully devifed, and the expression, prayers of all faints, is unluckily too comprehensive to be confined only to martyrs: likewife the notion, that the filence in beaven for half an hour alludes to the temple fervice, when the people prayed filently without, during the time that the priest burned the incense in the fanctuary, will not accord with the description, because, the silence for half an hour, feems to have been before the incense was given to the angel to offer. I therefore think we have a more fure and fufficiently important meaning, by understanding the great filence in heaven, of a folemn and fignificant pause, CHAP.

paufe, to roufe and command attention to the awful fcenes that were foon to be introduced; and which were quickly announced by fire taken from the altar and cast upon the earth, which occasioned voices, and thunders, and lightening, and an earthquake, the emblems of fore judgements; and likewiseby understanding the silence to denote a certain period of rest and quiet still remaining, before these awful judgements commenced. On the other hand, I think the learned Vitringa goes to the opposite extreme, in confining the feventh feal, to the filence in heaven for half on hour, which he understands of the peaceful state of the church after the fall of antichrift; and confiders the trumpets as beginning a new feries of prophecy. Notwithstanding there is certainly

not the smallest hint of a new series, but every mark of a continuation of the former, as the connection of the passage plainly shews.

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We shall therefore proceed to the interpretation of the circumstances that were exhibited on founding the trumpets.

The

THE SOUNDING OF THE FIRST TRUMPET.

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Ver. 6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets, prepared them-selves to sound.

Ver. 7. The first angel sounded (2), and there followed hail, and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

The

(a) Among the Jews, trumpets were not only used at their solemn and joyful religious sessivals, but likewise as the signal of war, and the call to go forth to battle: see I Cor. xiv 8. The sound of a trumpet, therefore, is properly employed in this prophecy, as the prelude of calamity, devastation and woe.

The feven angels, here spoken of, are not properly angels, but the ministers and instruments of the divine judgements upon the earth.

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The plague of the first trumpet, confifted in a terrible from of hail and lightning mingled with blood. Blood showered down from heaven may appear a very unnatural, though, at the fame time, it must be allowed to be a very fignificant and awful emblem: but, not to mention that the prophetical images are not confined to what is natural, this description is not so extravagant, as fome may imagine. Showers, apparently of blood, are well attested to have fallen in different places; water has appeared to be turned into blood: and the refearches of modern times have enabled us to explain the cause.

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The diligent Swammerdan relates, that, as he was fitting one day in his cabinet, he heard a great rumour and alarm among the people. When he had enquired into the cause of it, he found it was occasioned by the water of Leyden being turned, as they thought, into blood: but by an examination of it he found, that the change of colour was derived from the greenish red monoculus, a minute animal, found in it in great numbers: just as the luminous appearance of the fea, by night, at certain times, has been lately discovered to be caused by the nereis noctiluca.

But, not to infilt on observations of this kind, no emblems can more strongly represent the impetuous violence of a sierce and bloody enemy over-running and destroying a country, than those which are here employed;

employed; a storm of hail and lightning which produces fudden and great destruction. This mingled with blood, indicates great flaughter, as well as devastation. We have therefore a flriking accomplishment of the prophecy of the first trumpet, in the irruptions of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire, which happened at this period, and the destruction and mifery which they produced. But, as I consider the first four trumpets to be a prophecy of the four remaining steps of the fall of the Roman empire, till its final extermination, I confine the first trumpet to the calamities which it tuffered from Alaric. About the year 395, Alaric at the head of his native Goths and other barbarous people, by the instigation of Rusinus, the ambitious minister of Arcadius, who grasped

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ed at fovereign power, laid waste all Theffaly, Pannonia, Macedonia, and Thrace; and entering into Greece, these barbarians committed the greatest cruelties wherever they went, putting all to the fword who attempted the fmallest resistance, and fending the whole wealth of the rich provinces, and even the women and children who fell into their hands, to the distant countries from whence they came. They likewife laid wafte the whole country between the Adriatic and the Euxine fea; the wretched inhabitants, to escape death or captivity, hiding themfelves in dens and caves of the earth. Some years after this, there were likewife dreadful earthquakes in most provinces of the eaff: the cities of Constantinople and Chalcedon were violently fhaken; many houses were burnt with

with lightning; and the fea, over- CHAP. flowing its banks, laid whole provinces under water.

In the year 400, the Goths, who had been driven out of Greece by Stilicho, rushed into Italy under their general Alaric, and Radagaifus king of the Hunns, and ravaged the country to a wide extent. Their flay in Italy at this time, however, was not long; but, two years after, Alaric invaded that country anew, and finding no army to oppose him, he laid waste the provinces of Venetia and Liguria, and made imperial Rome itself to tremble. But Stilicho marching his troops unexpectedly into Rhætia, gave him battle at Pollentia, and reduced him to fuch difficulties as obliged him to fue for peace.

In the year 404, the barbarous nations again invaded Italy, led on CHAP.

by Radagaifus, king of the Hunns: Their number was very great; force writers reckoning it not less than four hundred thousand. The lords who commanded them, are faid by a contemporary writer, to have been not less than twelve hundred. The news of their approach made all Italy and Rome to tremble. Stilicho, however, fell upon them with his troops unexpectedly, and gained a complete victory; an hundred thousand of the enemy being flain in battle: the remainder he after wards befreged among the mountains of Fefulx, to which they had fled, and reduced them to such straits, that Radagaifus their leader, in attempting to make his escape, fell into Stilicho's hands, and was put to death: his men, deferted by their leader, and dettitute of provifions, funk into defpondency, and gave

gave themselves up to the Romans CHAP. in fuch numbers, that they were fold like beafts at a crown a head; but being infected with disease, in confequence of the famine which they endured in the mountains, they all died in the course of a few days.

The empire, however, obtained but a very temporary relief from calamity, even by this extraordinary victory; for, at the end of the year 406, the Alans, the Vandals, and the Suevi, broke into Gaul, and committed dreadful ravages: they carried Mentz by storm, destroyed the city, and massacred many thousands of the inhabitants. They likewife took, and laid in ashes, Worms, Strasburg and Spires; and over-ran and wasted the whole country, from the Alps to the Pyrenees, and from the Rhine to the Ocean.

CHAP. VIII. In the mean time, the Roman army in Britain revolted, and chose Constantine, a private soldier, to be emperor; who, passing over into Gaul, soon made himself master of all that country, and was at last acknowledged by Honorius as his colleague.

Not long after, Italy was again alarmed by Alaric and his barbarians; and Rome itself was so closely befieged, that a famine and peftilence began to reign in the city, by which the inhabitants were reduced to the utmost extremity, and at last obliged to fend out deputies to treat with Alaric, who, for a great price, agreed to raife the fiege. He retired with his army to Hetruria, from thence, after a fhort flay, the emperor being unwilling to fulfil the treaty, he returned to Rome, and blocked it up a fecond time. Having made

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made himself master of the castle at the mouth of the Tiber, where all the public provisions were lodged, the gates of the city were immediately thrown open to him. He obliged the inhabitants to renounce their allegiance to Honorius, and to acknowledge Attalas, prefect of the city, for emperor.

In the year 410, a dreadful famine raged in Italy: the people, for want of bread, were reduced to the necessity of feeding upon chesnuts, and the famine still increasing, human flesh was publicly fold, and even mothers were faid to have devoured their own offspring.

In the mean time, Alaric, irritated by a new provocation, appeared again before the imperial city, blocaded it on every fide, and at last carried it by affault. The soldiers were allowed to plunder the

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inhabitants, but were firstly enjoined to spare their lives, excepting those whom they found in arms; and above all, not to pollute the churches, by shedding the blood of those who had sled to them for refuge.

Thus, on the 24th of August, in the year 410, that proud and lofty city, which had triumphed over fo many nations, and extended its dominions over all the known world, was taken by a barbarian, who had fcarcely a foot of ground which he could call his own; and having enriched herfelf, for many ages, with the spoils of the plundered nations, fhe fuffered in her turn the fame calamities which she had so often brought upon others. After plundering the city for feveral days, the foldiers fet it on fire, and reduced it to a heap of ashes; many of the inhabitants

inhabitants likewise were murder- CHAP. ed, notwithflanding the orders of the general; and a dreadful florin of thunder and lightning falling upon the city, completed its ruin and increased the horror of the fcene.

How apt and awful an accomplishment have we then, in this history, of the prophetical emblems which are here made use of! As a proof that they express such events as those to which we have applied them, we may observe, that the ancient prophets describe similar calamities by the very fame emblems. Thus Ifaiah describes the invalion of Ifrael by the king of Affyria, chap. xxix. 6. Behold the Lord bath a mighty and firong one, which as a tempest of bail and destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall

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cast down to the earth with the hand: and Ezek. chap. xiii. 13. prophefying against the ill tempered wall of peace which the false prophets had raised; Thus faith the Lord God, I will even rent it with a florm of wind in my fury, and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hail-stones in my fury to consume it; that is to fay, this wall of peace shall be broken down by a powerful and furious enemy, who, like a violent florm, shall carry all before them. And thus, the bail and the fire mingled with blood, which followed the founding of the first trumpet, aptly denote the dreadful calamities which took place in that period which we have now been reviewing; while the third part of the trees being burnt up, and all the green grafs, indicates the destruction which came upon all ranks, ranks, high and low; trees denoting perfons of high rank, and the grafs the common people (*).



(a) Forbesius understands the judgement announced by this trumpet, to be upon the church; and the fire, to be the fire of contention, producing the frigid hail of contracted affections, and the cold rains of felf-love. The blood mingled with these, he takes to be, either the Gentile persecutions, or the cruel contention under Constans, Constantius, and Valens.

Durham understands this trumpet, of the impious herefy of Arius, which was both very peftilent in itself, and stained far and wide with the perfecution of the orthodox. Mede, Bishop Newton, Jurieu, and others, understand it, to be a judgement upon the empire, as above. The learned Vitringa explains it of difease, famine, and fword, coming upon the empire, especially between the times of Trajan and Gallienus; but including likewise any other periods at which they may have happened; and thus making the accomplishment of prophecy loofe and uncertain. Several other commentators think that the occurrences in the Roman empire, are too mean an object for the spirit of prophecy to pay so great attention attention to in this and the preceding visions; not confidering that this great empire was the subject of prophecy from early times; as we see in the book of Daniel; and again, in after times, in the writings of the Apostle Paul, to whom it was declared, "that the man of fin should not be revealed, till it, (i. e. the Roman empire,) should be taken out of the way." How reasonable then to suppose, that a detail of his rise and progress, should be preceded by a description of the various steps by which that empire should be brought down to destruction.

THE SOUNDING OF THE SECOND TRUMPET.

Ver. 8. And the fecond angel founded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood:

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Ver. 9. And the third part of the reatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

A mountain is a natural emblem of strength; a mountain in motion denotes strength coming against those towards whom it is directed; and a burning mountain in motion is one of the most awful emblems of destruction that can well be conceived.

This

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This burning mountain was cast into the sea; that is, among the people; as the sea, in the language of prophecy, denotes. It turned the waters into blood; denoting great slaughter: and killed the third part of the creatures that were in the sea, and had life, and destroyed the third part of the ships; meaning, that the riches and strength of the empire were greatly injured by it.

This emblem, I conceive, to have been fully verified in Genferic, king of the Vandals, when, at the defire of the Empress Eudoxia, to revenge the death of her husband, he came over with a great fleet from Africa, having 300,000 men on board, invaded Italy, and took and pillaged Rome itself. He and his people remained fourteen days in the city, not only plundering private houses, but stripping the public buildings

of their precious ornaments, and even the churches of their facred vessels. They took a vast number of captives: Genseric himself forced the imperial palace, and seizing on the treasure and rich furniture with which it was stored, put them on board a vessel to be carried to Africa. The Empress Eudoxia and

her two daughters, were compelled

to follow the conqueror.

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Having thus fpoiled the city of all its wealth and valuable ornaments, among which are faid to have been the facred veffels which Titus had formerly taken out of the Temple of Jerufalem, he fet fail, and returned with his fleet to Africa. The fuccefsful attempts which had now been repeatedly made upon Italy and Rome, and the weakness with which they had N n been

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been opposed, invited the barbarous nations to make fresh inroads upon the empire. These were evils which Genseric drew in his train, and therefore are to be taken into the accomplishment of the prophecy which we are now explaining. Let us turn our eyes then, for a moment, upon these dreadful calamities.

About this time, the Burgundians, who had been removed from the banks of the Rhine, and had long dwelt among the mountains of Savoy, feized upon the fouth of Gaul, and made themfelves mafters of Lyons. The Vifigoths likewife, under Theodoric their king, having almost wholly reduced Gallicia, entered Lusitania, subdued several of its cities, and even Merida itself, the metropolis. Returning to Gallicia, they committed great cruelties in

the city of Astorga, into which they had been admitted in a friendly manner; they plundered and murdered most of the inhabitants, set fire to the city, and carried into captivity all whose lives they had spared, both clergy and people.

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In the year 459, an army of Visigoths, fent by Theodoric into Spain, wasted the province of Bætica; while the Suevi over-ran Gallicia upon the south, putting all the inhabitants to the sword.

The same year, the city of Antioch in the east, was almost utterly ruined by an earthquake.

The year following, the Roman fleet was attacked by the Vandals in the bay of Alicant, with fuch fucces, that most of the ships were taken, and carried in triumph to Africa.

Not

CHAP. VIH. Not long after this, Genferic gained another fignal victory over the Roman fleet, on the shores of Africa. He burnt many of their ships, took several more, sunk others, and obliged the rest to save themselves by slight.

By these disastrous events, the empire was so wasted and weakened, that it was now fast hurrying on to its fall. And the whole of the period now under consideration, was a series of such severe, such awful, such general calamity, as comes up in every respect to the strong emblematical description by which it is here represented (*).

into

⁽a) Bishop Newton understands the events which accompanied the sounding of this trumpet, to represent those calamities which were produced the the conquests of Attila, and his incursions

into the empire. Hence, from the order of events, he is obliged to interpret those which followed the next trumpet, with no propriety, of Genferic king of the Vandals.

Durham explains this of the lofty ambition of ecclefiaftics, and their hot contentions about the primacy, after the council of Nice.

THE

THE SOUNDING OF THE THIRD TRUMPET.

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Ver. 10. And the third angel founded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters:

Ver. 11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood: and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

I cannot think, with the learnand ingenious Mede, that the circumflance which attended the founding of this trumpet, fignified the deposition or degradation of Augustulus,

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gustulus, whom he supposes to be represented by the great star which fell from heaven. Upon this fupposition, no good account can be given of its falling upon the third part of the fountains of waters, or, of men dying of the waters, because they were made bitter. That interpreter himself seems so sensible of this. that he does not attempt any explanation of that circumstance, and thereby leaves the mind of the reader quite unsatisfied. Neither can I think with Bishop Newton, that this emblematical reprefentation has a reference to Genferic, king of the Vandals; for with no propriety can he be reprefented by a flar falling from the imperial heaven, as he never belonged to it. But if we understand it of Ricimer, and of the mischiefs which he did to the empire, we shall find, I presume, a

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very apt and adequate accomplishment of the whole of the description. This Ricimer was a very extraordinary character. Though he feems to have been of Gothic extraction, he ferved from his youth in the Roman armies, and acquired fuch reputation for his warlike achievements, that at length he was raifed to the highest dignities; being made commander in chief of all the Roman forces in the west, patrician, and fon-in-law to the emperor. But his ambition was unbounded and daring; he prefumed to create and depose emperors at his pleafure; and, excluded by birth from affirming the purple himfelf, he delighted in shewing that he could embroil those who wore it. Impelled by the irrefiftable force of his ambition, he murdered four emperors; three of whom had been raifed

raised by himself to the throne. At last, elated with his victory over Genseric, whom he had utterly defeated at fea, upon the shores of Corfica, and afraid of the emperor Anthemius, whom he had raifed to the crown in opposition to the demands of Genferic, he openly revolted, and at the head of the barbarians in the Roman fervice, befieged Rome, where the emperor then was. The citizens, notwithstanding the famine and plague which forely afflicted them, made a vigorous refistance, expecting fuccours out of Gaul under the command of Bilimer, who hastened to their relief. Bilimer at length arrived with a confiderable army, but was totally defeated by Ricimer, who, encouraged by the victory he had obtained, preffed the fiege more strenuously, till at last, entering by a breach Ω o

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CHAP. VIII. breach into the city, he wasted it with no less fury than Alaric or Genseric had done, allowing his men not only to plunder, but to commit all manner of cruelties. He caused Anthemius his father-in-law to be put to death, and Olybrius to be proclaimed emperor in his room.

Here then we have a character in whom the striking emblems that attended the sounding of this trumpet, seem to be completely realized. By the high rank and authority which he held in the empire, he may be considered as a star in the imperial heavens; by his revolt, he appears as a star shooting out of its place: he is properly called wormwood on account of the bitter sufferings which he occasioned: and, although Italy and Rome were the

chief scene of his operations, yet, in his revolt he may be faid to have fallen upon the rivers, and fountains of water, as it was a great encouragement to the depredations and cruelties of the barbarians, in the provinces, by which their waters were made bitter, and many died. His example, likewife, excited the revolt of the other barbarians in the Roman fervice, who chose Odoacer for their leader. By him, Augustulus the last emperor was flripped of the imperial dignity, and put into a state of confinement. After this, he caufed himfelf to be proclaimed king of Italy, and thus put an end to the very name of empire in the

Thus, Italy and its proud metropolis, which, for fo many ages, had given law to the world, was enflaved

weft.

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CHAP. VIII. enflaved by an obfcure barbarian, whose family, country, and nation, are not certainly known.

This revolution happened in the year 476.

THE

THE SOUNDING OF THE FOURTH TRUMPET.

Ver. 12. And the fourth angel founded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

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The former trumpet brought us to the death of Ricimer, and the degradation of Augustulus. This announces the total extinction of the Roman Government: an event which is expressed, by a third part of the sun being smitten, and a third part of the moon, and a third part of the stare;

CH AP. VIII. or, in other words, the fun, moon, and stars being smitten, in a third part of the world: meaning the Roman empire. The smiting and darkening of the heavenly bodies, signifies, in the language of prophecy, the falling of kingdoms, and the destruction of governments: thus, Ezekiel describes the destruction of the kingdom of Egypt, chap. xxxii. 7, 8.

This extinction of the Roman government did not happen till the destruction of the kingdom of the Ostrogoths in Italy, in the year 556: after which, that country was governed with an absolute sway, by the lieutenants of the Emperor of the east. The first of these was Longinus, sent thither by the emperor Justin 2d, who changed the whole form of government, abolished the tenate, the consuls, and

all the former magistrates, and appointed a new governor in every city; over all of whom he presided under the title of Exarch of Ravenna, the place where he had his residence.

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Thus, the Roman Government was finally destroyed, its lights were extinguished, Rome itself was degraded to a poor dukedom, and even made tributary to Ravenna, which she formerly had governed (a).

Ver.

(a) Durham interprets this fourth trumpet, of the great decline of learning, and learned men, in the church, in the fixth century; and of the darkness of error, when the ancient heresies were revived, particularly the Eutychian, which the emperor Anastasius approved and cherished: then too, primitive zeal and piety were greatly eclipsed. Vitringa likewise refers it chiesly to the church; but he fixes the period to which it belongs towards the close of the fourth century, between the rise of arianism, and the spoiling of

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Ver. 13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabiters of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound.

This vision is an awful notice to the Roman church and people, now fallen into great corruption, of the much heavier judgements, which their increasing wickedness was yet to bring down upon their guilty heads, under the three trumpets which were yet to found.

THE

the empire by the Goths: this he feems to have done, chiefly with a view to interpret the next trumpet of the irruptions of that people, and the calamities they produced. At this time, however, he thinks the majefty of the empire was degraded; and the lights of the church, the patriarchs and the bifhops, figured by the moon and the stars, were obscured by ignorance and corruption.

THE SOUNDING OF THE FIFTH TRUMPET.

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Ver. 1. And the fifth angel founded, CHAP. and I faw a star fall from beaven unto he earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

Ver. 2. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the fun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

Ver. 3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Ver. 4. And it was commanded them that they should not burt the grass of the earth. Pp

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earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the feal of God in their foreheads.

Ver. 5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

Ver. '6. and in those days shall men feek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall slee from them.

Ver. 7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads, were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

Ver. 8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

Ver. 9. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound

of their wings was as the found of chariots of many horses running to battle.

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Ver. 10. And they had tails like unto fcorpions, and there were slings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

Ver. II. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue he hath his name Apollyon.

Ver. 12. One woe is past; and behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

Commentators have confidered this vision as particularly obscure, and difficult of interpretation: yet, it seems to receive a very probable meaning, and a very adequate accomplishment, when it is understood of the inroads of the Saracens into the Roman empire; and of the dreadful

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dreadful devastation which they produced. The star falling from heaven will not, indeed, apply to Mahomet, as he never was a teacher, either in the heaven of the church, or of the empire. But why may we not understand it of the old ferpent himfelf, who was once in heaven, and fell from it by his apoftafy? He is fitly reprefented as a star that had fallen from heaven; and when the great Lord of all, is pleafed to permit it, has with great propriety, the key of the bottomless pit given to bim, to let forth his emissaries upon the earth. The smoke that rose out of the pit, denotes the dark delufion of Mahometanifm which then arofe, and which, by the groffnefs of its errors, darkened the fun and the air. The locusts that came out of the smoke, were the vast legions of Saracens, who were infected with

with that delufion, and who had power given them to produce great destruction in the empire. Their being commanded, not to burt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, mystically signifying neither fmall nor great, probably refers to the orders of their leaders, who used to give them instructions of this kind; which affords an internal proof, that the prophecy belongs to them. Their tormenting men for five months, alludes to the length of their warlike campaigns, which were not commonly beyond that period; another internal evidence that this is the true application of the prophecy: and the mifery to which they reduced their numberless captives, made men weary of their lives, and to feek death when they could not find it. The crowns of gold which they had on their heads, denote their turbans

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turbans adorned with gold; and their bair as the bair of women, refers to the long hair which that people delighted to wear, and which they plaitted, and ornamented, in various ways. The flings in their tails, may be referred, either to their barbarities, and the devastation which they every where left behind them; or, to the poison of their doctrine, which they carried along with them, wherever they went. The king whom they had over them, can be no other than the old ferpent, the destroying angel, who released them from the pit; as appears from his very names, Abaddon, and Apollyon, which fignify a Destroyer; a proof that our interpretation of the flar that fell from heaven, is just. When all these circumstances are considered, it feems rather furprifing, that commentators should have found this

this prophecy fo difficult of application; as there are scarcely any of the prophecies of this book, that have been more minutely fulfilled. It likewise agrees exactly to the order of time in which the feveral vifions are arranged; for it was in the year 606, that Mahomet began to assume the character of a prophet. His flight from Mecca to Medina, from whence the Hegira is computed, was in the year 622. Then he announced to his disciples, that his religion was to be propagated by fire and fword. Accordingly, the year following, he fet the example of this, in robbing and plundering all who would not fubmit to him, and embrace his religion. His first adventure, was his attacking and beating the traders of Mecca, though guarded by a thousand men. In his perpetual wars, he comforted

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comforted the friends of those who had fallen in battle, by assuring them, that, as the time of life was determined by God, they died no sooner than they must otherwise have done: and moreover, as they died sighting for the faith, the crown of martyrdom, and the joys of paradise, would be their everlasting and distinguished recompense.

At last, about the year 631, this arch-impostor died, having taken the cities of Mecca and Medina, and subdued almost the whole of Arabia: thus establishing a new religion and a new empire, with a more rapid and extensive progress, than, had ever, till then, been known.

After his death, the Saracens became the fcourge and depredators of Afia, Africa, and Europe. They took Damafeus; reduced Egypt and Syria;

Syria; besieged and took Jerusalem; laid waste Armenia, and conquered Africa. But they were chiesly destructive in their incursions into the Roman empire.

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The history of these, however, would require a much larger detail than can be inserted here. Let it therefore suffice, in general, to observe, that they not only left the inhabitants in great misery, depriving them of their property and means of subsistence, but they sometimes even tortured on the rack, those whose lives they had spared.

Well then might the torment which they inflicted, be compared in this prophecy to the torment of a fcorpion when he striketh a man.

We are told, v. 12. that one woe is past, in the accomplishment of the last trumpet, but that two more

Q q

woes

CHAP. IX. woes come bereafter meaning, in the two remaining trumpets that were to found (*).

(a) The learned Vitringa understands this trumpet, of the irruptions of the Goths, under Alaric and Ataulphus, which, by the order of these prophecies, obliges him to go into a very unnatural and forced interpretation of feveral of the former, without possessing any superior advantage to recommend it. Mr. Durham, again, explains the locusts, of the corrupt and destructive monks, and their king, of antichrift; not confidering, that, as the judgement of this trumpet fell chiefly upon idolaters, and those that were funk in superstition and corruption, it is not likely, that he or his instruments would torment perfons of this description. Cluverus, following the ancients, understands this trumpet, of heretics and their false doctrine: thus giving the emblem a meaning which is quite unknown in fcripture; locusts being used there only to fignify destroying armies; and the emblem is certainly very apt, whether we confider their vast numbers, the fwiftness of their progress, or the dewastation which they produce; the land whereever they come, though as the garden of Eden before them, being as a barren wilderness behind. It is an amazing instance of the power of God, and very humiliating to human pride, that he can make fo weak and contemptible a creature, an instrument of destruction to man. This indeed is often effected by means even of the fmallest of the animal creation. The celebrated Linnæus concludes an effay upon infects with this remark; "These are the armies of the Most High, to punish disobedient nations. Every band has its orders to fulfil, in the distribution of reward and punishment. If he decree to chastize mankind, a fingle species of these animals is multiplied as the fand of the fea, who perform their divine commission. Is the grass of the earth to be cut off? Many legions of the Phalæna Graminis are at hand; one kind destroys corn, another devours our pot herbs, another our cheese and our meal, another our flesh meat, another our clothes, another the ribs of ships. But who can enumerate their multiplied tribes? The Supreme Disposer of all things, gives his command to those minute animalcules, the Sirones, and the whole man becomes one loathfome contagion. Not to mention those ministers of difeafe and death which bring down upon us the plague, the fmall-pox, the spotted fever, and other infectious. infectious, and spreading disorders." From these observations we may see with what propriety any, even of the meanest of the animal creation, may be employed as emblems of a destroying army: but of all the tribes, none could be more sitly chosen than the locust, both from the qualities formerly mentioned, and from its martial appearance in making its inroads, and from the armour, both offensive and defensive, with which it is furnished, its body being covered with a kind of coat of mail, and its limbs armed with saws.

THE SOUNDING OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

Ver. 13. And the fixth angel founded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

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Ver. 14. Saying to the fixth angel which had the trumpet, Loofe the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

Ver. 15. And the four angels were loofed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to flay the third part of men.

Ver. 16. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

CHAP. 1X. Ver. 17. And thus I faw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of sire, and of jacinet, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions: and out of their months issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone.

Ver. 18. By these three was the third part of mankind killed, by the sire, and by the simstone, which issued out of their mouths.

Ver. 19. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

Ver. 20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Ver.

Ver. 21. Neither repented they of CHAP. their murders, nor of their forceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The prophecy of this trumpet has received fo exact an accomplishment, in the incursions of the Turks into the empire, and the ravages which they committed, that I think it not only unnecessary, but improper to feek for another. The four angels, denote the four kingdoms, or governments, into which the Turks were divided, when they first croffed the Euphrates, and invaded the neighbouring regions of Afia and Syria: or, perhaps, more strictly, the kings, or princes who prefided over them. These several governments bordered on the Euphrates; one seated at Bagdad, another at Damascus, the third at Aleppo, and the fourth at Iconium. They

were

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were restrained from extending their conquests to any distance, which the prophecy expresses, by the angels being bound in the river Euphrates. The restraint was imposed on them for a confiderable time, by the arms of Tamerlane the Tartar conqueror; still longer, by their own civil wars; and by the Crufaders, or, as Mede pleafantly calls them, the Christian Argonauts, who in their expedition to Jerufalem, having vanquished Soliman, Sultan of the Turks, drove them back to the Euphrates (*).

They .

(a) The whole period of this reftraint, the prophecy expresses, by an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year; which Mede, and others, understand of the time which was limited for the Turkish conquests; but which is more naturally interpreted of the hour, and day, and month, and year, when they were permitted to carry devastation and misery into the surrounding countries.

They were at that time formed into one great government, known fince by the name of the Ottoman empire: fome account of which, and of its conquests here referred to, I shall give in the words of the celebrated historian, of the decline and fall of the Roman empire. "The Ottoman empire," fays he (*), R r "began

CHAF,

tries. Therefore, they are faid to have been prepared unto the hour, and day, and month, and year, 'or ntolpaspisol sis the again x. t. h. meaning the precise time when they were to be loosed, or allowed to go forth. This shews us how the armies of the princes of this world, are prepared of God, to accomplish the ends of his providence, and are entirely under his direction and controul. How secure and happy then, are the people whose God is the Lord! The greatest power upon earth shall not be able to hurt them. No power upon earth, ever sent forth such armies of cavalry, as the Turks have done, yet they could not stir one foot till the angel was sent to loose them.

^(*) Chap. lxiv.

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" began under the Caliph Othman, about the year 1299. The circumflances of the time and place were propitious to his independence and fuccefs. The Seljukian dynasty was no more; and the distance and decline of the Mogul khans, foon enfranchifed him from the controul of a fuperior. He was fituated on the verge of the Greek empire: the Koran fanctified his holy war against the infidels; and their political errors unlocked the passes of Mount Olympus, and invited him to defcend into the plains of Bithymia.

"In the year 1299, Othman first invaded the territory of Nicomedia. The annals of the 27th year of his reign, exhibited a repetition of the tame inroads; and his hereditary troops were multiplied in each campaign, by the accession of captives and volunteers. Prusa surrendered, in his old age, to the arms of his son Orchan.

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"All the troops of Othman confifted of Turkman cavalry; who ferved without pay, and fought without discipline: but a regular body of infantry was first established and trained by the prudence of his fon. He likewise formed a train of battering engines for the use of sieges; and the first successful experiment was made on the cities of Nice and Nicomedia. He vanquished and wounded the emperor Andronicus the younger; and he fubdued the whole province, or kingdom, of Bithynia, as far as the shores of the Bosphorus and Hellespont. maritime country, from the Propontis to the Mæander and the Isle of Rhodes, was finally loft about the 30th year of Andronicus the elden

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elder. The captivity, or ruin, of the feven churches of Asia, was confummated; and the barbarous lords of Ionia and Lydia, still trample on the monuments of claffic and Christian antiquity. In the loss of Ephesus, the Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candleslick, of the Revelation: the defolation is complete; and the temple of Diana, or the church of Mary, will equally elude the fearch of the curious traveller The circus and the three stately theatres of Laodicea, are now peopled with wolves and foxes: Sardis is reduced to a miferable village; the God of Mahomet is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamus; and the populoufness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians.

Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been faved. Encompassed on all fides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourfcore years; and at last capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. In the year 1341 the Turks first entered Europe: and in the reign of Amurath I. in 1360, their conquests were rapid and extensive. That victorious prince fubdued, without refistance, the whole province of Thrace, from the Hellespont to the Hæmus, and the verge of the capital. The Sclavonian nations fubmitted to his power. But after the battle of Cassova, when walking over the field in all the pride of victory, a Servian foldier flarted from the croud of dead bodies, and Amurath was pierced in the belly with a mortal wound.

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" His fon, Bajazet I. invaded, with impartial ambition, the Chriftian and Mahometan princes of Europe and Asia. Whatever yet adhered to the Greek empire, in Thrace, Macedonia, and Theffaly, acknowledged a Turkish master. In the battle of Nicopolis in 1396, Bajazet defeated a confederate army, under Sigifmond the Hungarian king, confifting of an hundred thoufand Christians, who had proudly boafted, that if the sky should fall they could uphold it on their lances. The far greater part were flain, or driven into the Danube: and Sigifmond, escaping to Constantinople, by the river and the Black Sea, returned, after a long circuit, to his exhausted kingdom. A body of 1000 French knights had joined Sigifmond; many of them fell in the battle; and those of them who had

had furvived the flaughter of the day, were, excepting only twenty-four, led before the throne of the tyrant, and as many as refused to renounce their faith, were succeffively beheaded in his presence.

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"In the year 1400, Tamerlane made war against Sultan Bajazet, and checked his ambitious defigns. He invaded Syria, facked Aleppo, reduced Damascus to ashes, and erected a pyramid of ninety thoufand heads on the ruins of Bagdad. Marching into the heart of the Ottoman empire, he defeated, and took prisoner, Bajazet, in the memorable battle of Angora. The haughty Sultan is faid afterwards to have been carried about in an iron cage, on a waggon, in Tamerlane's perpetual marches. In 1405, the conqueror of Asia was met by the angel of death, in the neighbourhood

CHAP. IX. bourhood of Otrar, when he was carrying his victorious arms into China.

" In 1422, Amurath II. befieged Conftantinople, but without fuccess, though the Turkish cannon were first pointed against its walls and bulwarks. The final conquest of that city, and with it the extinction of the Roman empire in the east, was left to be accomplished by his fon. Mahomer II. The instruments of destruction, which had been pre-*pared by this ambitious tyrant, were the most tremendous that had ever appeared in the world. A Danish, or Hungarian deserter, is faid to have cast that enormous cannon, which required a ball of stone of fix hundred pounds weight, was drawn by fixty, fome fay feventy, yoke of oxen, and which, when it was first discharged by way of experiment, periment, alarmed with the shock CHAPof the explosion, those who were upwards of twelve miles distant. The city was at length befieged, both by fea and land; fourteen batteries thundered at once upon its walls; the ancient engines of destruction were likewise employed. But the Greeks made a vigorous and obstinate resistance. I mean not to enter into a detail of the circumstances of this daring and bloody enterprise. Let it suffice to observe, that after a fiege of fifty-three days, the proud metropolis of the east was entirely fubdued: thousands were infantly cut to pieces by the barbarians; and the last Constantine, having prudently cast away the purple, fell undistinguished, and was buried under a mountain of flain. The plunder of the houses and of the churches was immense;

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but the number, and fituation of the captives were most affecting. No regard to rank or fex was paid by the unfeeling conquerors. Even the nearest kindred were not allowed the melancholy comfort to spend their miserable days together. They were rudely torn from each others embraces; and above sixty thousand of that devoted people, were dispersed in distant servitude through the Turkish provinces."

These conquerors, like the former, are represented with stings like scorpions, intimating, that they would also endeavour to instil the poison of their false religion wherever they went (a).

⁽a) Lowman objects firongly to this interpretation of the prophecy, because it places its accomplishment far too late for the order of these predictions, (that is to say, the order which he established,) and therefore he is obliged to divide

the history of the incursions of the Saracens into two parts, and to apply the preceding vision to the former, and this vision to the latter. The fymbolical descriptions are so diverse, that they seem plainly to denote two distinst people, similar indeed in fome things, but very different in others; on this account he is obliged to give a different turn to the very remarkable prediction of the use of gun-powder in this vision, because he applies it to a period long before its invention. He therefore supposes the fire, and smoke, and brimstone, issuing out of their mouths, to denote only the terror of their appearance when marching to war: a fense too general and inadequate for an inquiring mind to acquiesce in: and though it has been objected, that the fire, and the fmoke, and the brimftone, are improperly reprefented as coming out of their mouths, yet, nothing can be more natural than this reprefentation, when we confider them in the attitude of riding up against an enemy, and firing their pieces as they went.

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Ver. 1. And I faw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

Ver. 2. And he had in his hand a little book open: and he fet his right foot upon the fea, and his left foot on the earth,

Ver. 3. And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

Ver. 4. And when the feven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write, and I heard a voice from heaven, ven, faying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

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Ver. 5. And the angel which I faw fland upon the fea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven,

Ver. 6. And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

Ver. 7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

Ver. 8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again and said, Go, and take the little book, which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

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Ver. 9. And I went unto the angel, and faid unto him, Give me the little book. And he faid unto me, take it, and can it up: and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

Ver. 10. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth fweet as honey: and as foon as I had eaten it my belly was hitter.

Ver. 11. And he said unto me, Thow must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

It has been much disputed by commentators, what is to be underflood by the little book, which the apostle saw in the angel's hand: whether it was a book of prophecy, or the gospel revelation, or the remaining part of the sealed book, or a different one. Mede supposes that

that it contained the occurrences of Providence respecting the church, as the other did respecting the empire; and he thinks it goes back again to the apostle's time; grounding this opinion, upon what is certainly a very flight foundation, that the apostle was told, that he must prophefy again before many peoples, &c. Those who hold it to be the gospel revelation, give no fatisfying account of the apostle being commanded to eat it, and of its being fweet in his mouth, but making his belly bitter. They make it indeed, to fignify the scriptures being given to the people at the time of the reformation, because it is represented as open in the angel's hand; and yet none but the apostle was allowed to take it from him; which, upon this interpretation, looks rather as if it were to be confined

CHAP. X. CHAP. X. fined to the office-bearers in the church. With respect to the angel; when we confider the magnificence of the description, and its similarity to that of the Saviour, in the first chapter, and to that of God fitting upon the throne, in the fourth, and that he is called an angel, a defignation of office, there can be little doubt that the same divine person, the Lord and Saviour himfelf, is here to be understood. His swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever, can be no objection to this interpretation, when we find God himfelf fwearing to confirm his promife, Heb. chap. vi. 17. This glorious person set his right foot on the sea, and bis left foot on the earth, intimating, that the world, and all things in it, were fubject to him; and he cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth: the word which is here employed,

is that which donotes the lowing of an ox; but it has been observed by naturalists, that, when the old lions have taken any prey, they call upon their young, with a cry like the lowing of a cow; and indeed from Sparman's account of the roaring of the lions, there feems to be a confiderable fimilarity between their founds: he expresses the found of the lion's roaring, by the two vowels uo uo; fo that the inaccuracy, if there be any, of using the other expression, must be of the flightest kind: rather, perhaps, it is chosen on purpose, to denote vengeance and destruction But, what is of more importance to be confidered, when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices, and when the apoftle was going to write what the feven thunders uttered, a voice from heaven commanded him to feal them

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up and not to write them. It is thought by fome expositors, that these thunders, in the courfe of the following prediction, are opened as they express it, into distinct voices. But they must have been distinct voices at first, otherwise it is not easy to conceive how the apostle could write them: with regard to their after opening, it feems to rest upon no folid foundation, for there is not the fmallest mention of them in any future prediction. It has been much inquired, what the meaning of these thunders is; though fome have endeavoured to check this inquiry, by remarking the impropriety, or rather prefumption, of fearching into what God has ordered to be fealed up. But the learned Vitringa threwdly observes, that if God did not mean that we should know any thing of these thunders, he would not have revealed any thing by John respecting them, but passed over the whole in filence. This author, therefore, after inquiring into their mysterious import, thinks he has not only unfolded it, but likewife has difcovered the reason why it was to be fealed up, and not written: and indeed it must be confessed, that the manner in which he understands, and applies, their meaning, is very plaufible and ftriking. He confiders thunders as the emblems of unexpected events, that were to fall out like lightning and thunder, filling all places with noise and confernation wherever they were: and he applies them, in this passage, to the crusades, or the expeditions which were carried on to the Holy Land by the European nation, to deliver it out of the hands of the Saracens and Turks. Thefe.

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CHAP. he observes, by the noise, and terror, and calamity, which they occasioned, possessed all the characters of mystical thunders. These commotions were fo great, that they feemed to shake heaven and earth. In the Councils in which they were decreed, particularly the Clermont, under Urban II. and the Lateran, under Innocent III. fuch was the concourse of people of all ranks, and fo great the commotion, the bufiness was carried with so much noife, and with fuch acclamations of all, that the lion never roared fo loud and terrible. These expeditions, likewife, were fo new, and strange, and remarkable, that hiftory, ancient or modern, has scarcely any thing that can be compared with them. Besides, it will not be denied, that in these extraordinary motions, there was an evident dif-

play of the Divine judgements. It. appeared from the event, that these expeditions destroyed a very great, and an almost incredible number of people. They emptied Europe, at that time abounding in population, of many hundred thousands of its inhabitants, who miferably perished, either by the guiles of the Greeks, or of the Saracens and Turks, or in battles and fieges, or by florms at fea, or by the feverity and hardships of their marches. At the same time the Saracens and Turks, in this obstinate war, suffered incredible damage, and many fore difasters, and were deprived for a time, of the most flourishing part of their empire in Asia. Here is a certain depth of Divine judgement, which we are altogether unable to fathom. God punished the blind fuperstition of the Franks, by the Saracens

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Saracens and Turks; and now he fubdues their ferocity by the Franks; and teaches them that he is at no loss for a rod to chastife and restrain them. But what is remarkable, and particularly to our purpose, is, that the expeditions by the western croifaders, were exactly feven in number. The first, that celebrated one of Hugo the Great, the brother of Philip king of the Franks, and of Godfrey of Bouillon, duke of Lorrain, and of other princes of excellent valour, who led a chofen army into Asia, in the year 1096. The next, that of Conrad III emperor of Germany, and Louis VII. king of France, in the year 1147. The third, that of the emperor Frederic Barbarossa, in the year 1189. The fourth, that of Philip Augustus, king of France, and of Richard, king of England, in the year 1191.

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The fifth, that of the Flemings and CHAP. Venetians, under Balduin and Dandalo. The fixth, that of Andreas, king of the Hungarians, in 1217-18. The feventh, that of Louis IX. in the year 1248. And may it not be affigned as a reason, why God would not have these effects and confequences of the thunders written, that, although they were memorable events, they could not be more fully recorded, without difturbing the prophetical account of other occurrences, of much greater moment to the church, from the contemplation of which, God would not take off the attention of the reader of this prophecy. Nor were these expeditions worthy of being more fully narrated, as they were undertaken in folly, and terminated in difaster and difgrace. This is confessed even by their historians themselves.

CHAP. themselves. William of Tyre, in the preface to his history, observes, there is nothing that occurs in the deeds of our princes, which a wife man would reckon worthy to be committed to memory.'

> The declaration which the angel voluntarily confirmed with an oath, in the terms of our translation runs thus, " That there should be time no longer; but, perhaps more agreeably to the original words (a), That the time shall not be yet, or, as some critics render them, that delay shall not be longer; either way the meaning is the fame; namely, that the time of taking vengeance upon the enemies of the church, was not yet arrived, but that it should take place at the founding of the feventh trumpet: or, according to the last rendering,

Delay

^{(2) 871} xpovos &x e'sai E'TI.

Delay of that vengeance should be no longer than the founding of the feventh trumpet; for then the mystery of God should be finished; the great mystery of so long permitting the prevalence of corruption and oppression: then the time would certainly come, when the dead, that is, the dead martyrs, should be judged, or avenged, and when God should reward his faints, and them that fear his name, small and great, and should destroy them which destroy the earth, chap. xi. 18 That the little book which the angel had in his hand was a book of prophecy, is evident from the apostle being directed to eat it, as the ancient prophets ate their prophecies, that is, attentively perused them, and pondered them in their thoughts. This the apostle did; and it was in his mouth sweet as honey, but it made his belly Uu bitter.

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which it contained, were partly profeerous and partly adverse, occasioning a mixture of joy and grief; and not, as commentators have thought, that the mere discovery of future events was the cause of his joy; for such a discovery had been long familiar to him in the course of these visions. In consequence of his eating this book, it was faid to him, Thou must prophely again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Commentators have much perplexed and bewildered themselves, in determining what to make of this little book, even when they agree in considering it as a book of prophecy. In consequence of the notions they have entertained respecting it, they have divided the whole of the Revelation into two parts;

parts; one of which they call the feal prophecy, and the other, the book prophecy: forgetting that the former was a book prophecy, as well as the latter. Nor has it been an eafy matter to determine the contents of this little book, what they are, and where they are to be found. Vitringa overthrows completely the fcheme of Mr. Mede, who supposes that the little book goes back to the fame period when the former commenced, and predicts the fate of the church unto the end of time, by observing, that, according to Mede's own fcheme, the prophecy of this book is introduced between the fixth and the feventh trumpet, and confequently before the former feries is concluded, which not only is highly improbable, but throws the whole into confusion. truth is, that the contents of the little

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little book are no where related, nor do we know, but by conjecture, of what they confifted It feems to have been meant folely for the apostle's use, and perhaps contained fuch a description of those events which he afterward beheld in vision, as might enable him more clearly to understand them. This, indeed, feems to have been the chief intent of this whole vision, and was probably matter of more importance than we are apt to imagine: for, what deferves to be remarked, we find, that, after all, an angel was fent down from heaven to shew him many things, and to explain many things to him, which he would not otherwise have understood.

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Ver. 1. And there was given me a reed, like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

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Ver. 2. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

In these and some following verses, we have a lively description of a time of deep corruption in the western church, and of great difficulty

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culty and danger to the faithful fervants of God, who must now separate from that corrupt body, and fuffer all the violence of their refentment and enmity. By the emblem of the apostle measuring the temple and the altar, but leaving out the court which is without, is strongly intimated, that God was now about to make a visible distinction, between his faithful fervants, and those corrupt professors of Christianity, who had profaned the temple of the Lord, by pagan and idolatrous worship, and polluted it by their abominations and cruelties. The measuring reed which was given him, denotes the word of God, with which the church was to be meafured, that every thing in it might be according to the pattern shewn in the mount of revelation; while the outer court, or that great body who had

had fo long affumed the name of the church, was to be rejected; its whole extent, and even what was called the holy city, being given unto the Gentiles, meaning those corrupt and paganifed professors, who should tread it under foot forty and two prophetical months (2), or 1260 years. During this period, the true church was for the most part scarcely visible; being either shut up within the walls of the fanctuary; or, according to another vision, concealed in an obscure retreat in the wilderness, whither fhe had fled. But even in this time of darkness and corruption, witnesses for the truth should be raised up.

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Ver. 3. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand

⁽²⁾ Prophetical months; months of 30 days, and in which each day is accounted a year.

CH AP XI. thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Ver. 4. Thefe are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

In this prophecy, the Spirit of God speaks of the witnesses to the truth, as two, in allusion to the testimony which the law requires; and probably, as would feem from the following part of the description. in more immediate allusion to Zerubabel and Joshua; for they are represented as two olive trees, full of the precious doctrine of the spirit of truth himfelf, fimilar to Zechariah's vision, chap. iv. 3. and as two candleflicks plenteously supplied with the oil of this precious doctrine, and fending forth its light and comfort in the midst of furrounding darkness; thereby shewing the gross errors

errors and corruptions in which mankind were held; and doing the fame office in a spiritual sense, in building up the temple of the Lord under the reign of mystical Babylon, that Zerubabel and Joshua did under ancient Babylon.

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We are further informed respecting these witnesses:

Ver. 5. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

Here commentators have justly observed, that these witnesses are compared to some of the greatest prophets in ancient times, and particularly to Moses, and Elias, who brought fire upon the enemies of God, and consumed them. We

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must not conceive, however, that this was done by the witnesses in a strict and literal sense; but only that they denounced the awful judgements of God, sitly represented by sire, against these wicked persecutors: and therefore the sire of these judgements, thus denounced, is with great propriety, represented as coming out of their mouths. It is still further declared respecting them:

Ver. 6. Thefe have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to sinite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

The allusion to Moses and Elias is still kept up, as every one who knows their history will observe. But we must understand this in a spiritual

spiritual meaning, as an intimation, that, in the time of their prophecy, there should be a great want of the heavenly evangelical doctrine, in theperfecuting antichristian church; as there was great want of rain to the Ifraelites in the time of Elias. This doctrine is often, in scripture, compared to rain (a); and therefore it is here myttically fo represented. Likewise, they have power over waters to turn them into blood: their falutary doctrine, through the wickedness of those who reject it, being made the occasion of war and slaughter, by perfecuting men, which at last turned to their own destruction; " God giving them blood to drink, for they were worthy." Rev. xvi. 6. Lastly; they had power to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they would. The

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⁽a) Ifa. v. 6. and lv. II.

The prophets are often faid in fcripture, to do the things which they predict and denounce. Thus God fays to Isaiah, when he was to denounce the awful judgement of spiritual blindness and stupidity upon the Ifraelites, chap. vi. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed. This explains the meaning of the witnesses smiting the earth with all plagues: namely, by denouncing them against the wicked, as from the mouth of God, who remarkably, and awfully, accomplished what they had spoken: and this was brought about apparently with fo great facility, that they feemed to be able to do it as often as they pleased. Yet, notwithstanding this tremendous power, what is very

very remarkable, and shews at once the malice and infatuation of their enemies, and the length they should be permitted to go, though they should not finally prevail, it is said;

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Ver. 7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascenderh out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

Ver. 8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Ver. 9. And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

. Ver. 10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry,

CHAP. merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

> The meaning only is, when they shall be finishing their mourning testimony, and ready to put off their fackcloth, for we shall see them continuing their testimony still, the beaft, who is afterwards described as afcending out of the abyfs, for John had not yet feen him, was to make war against them, and overcome them, and kill them. By the Beast here, we are to understand the Romish antichrist, in all the debasement of his superstition, and in all the height of his favage tyranny. At the period here referred to, he perfecuted these witnesses with such fevere and unrelenting cruelty, that they were evidently borne down, and at last disappeared as persons dead:

dead; being apparently deftroyed by the violence of the perfecution. But not fatisfied with rooting them out from the earth, these wicked men treated their memory with the greatest abhorrence and contempt; here fymbolically expressed, by exhibiting their dead bodies three days and an half, a shocking and loathsome spectacle, in the most public fireet of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified This is a flriking defcription of mystical Babylon, by fome of its prominent features: it is called Sodom, because of the abominations of which it is full; and it is called Egypt, because of its cruel oppression and persecution of the people of God. It feems likewife tacitly to be compared to Jerufalem, that devoted city, where also our Lord was crucified. Their bodies

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are represented as lying in the street of the great city three days and an half, which cannot be understood literally, because the time would be too fhort for them that dwelt upon the earth, meaning their perfecutors every where, to rejoice over them, and to fend gifts one to another, and to make merry. It, therefore, it denotes a definite time, we must understand it at least to be three years and a half, a day for a year, according to the language of prophecy. But the fpirit of the prediction seems to be, that this should be a time of great affliction to the church, which should then be in the lowest state of depression; the witnesses for the truth being perfecuted and flain, almost as foon as they appeared. Some have thought that it was not the enemies, but the friends of the witnesses, who would not suffer their

their dead bodies to be put in graves. But these persons are described as they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, a description which, in the language of this prophecy, denotes the fubjects of Antichrist. Thus they are explained to John expressly, chap. xvii 15. "The waters which thou fawest, where the whore fitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." But what is most remarkable of all; while their enemies were looking upon them, and rejoicing that they were unable to torment them any more, by awakening the horrors of confcience within them by their faithful testimony; they were fecn to revive:

Ver. 11. And after three days and an half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet;

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and

and great fear fell upon them which faw them.

The Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; the meaning is, they were raifed up and honoused to bear testimony again: this is myflically, to be reftored to life, when they are restored to their office of witneffing; their mouths being again opened, which for a time had been shut in silence. Their testimony to the truth, likewife, was delivered with great power; for God in his wonderful providence, when all things feemed to be in a hopeless condition, quickly raifed up learned and pious men, and endued them with the fame fpirit with which the perfecuted and flain witnefles of Christ had been moved; they, to the great terror of their adversaries, taught the

the fame doctrine, and professed the same faith that the witnesses had done: they proposed and vindicated the truth with so much evidence and boldness, that the former witnesses might with great propriety be said to live in them. Besides all this; the favour of God wonderfully protected them, so that their enemies were not able to hurt them. This, the following words symbolically and magnificently declare:

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Ver. 12. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

Their enemies beheld them, no doubt, with rage and disappointment, when they were placed entirely out of their reach. I cannot think,

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thirk, with most commentators, that the witnesses here, derived their fecurity from an arm of flesh; it was from the wonderful interpolition, and protection of Ged, by whom even the greatest earthly powers, were reftrained from hurting them. This divine interposition, as it better fuits the emblem of their being taken up to heaven in a cloud, fo would it be much more confentaneous to the nature of the Redeemer's kingdom, which, he expressly tells us, is not of this world, and therefore he would not allow his fervants to fight. But while the faithful witnesses of God were thus wonderfully preferved, the judgements of heaven were poured forth upon their enemies; for,

Ver. 13 The same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city

of men seven thousand: and the remnant were offrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

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In that same hour; that is, much about that time, there was a great earthquake; an earthquake, in the language of prophecy, denotes commotions and changes in the states and governments of this world: and the shaking was so great that a tenth part of the city (meaning mystical Babylon, fell. By a tenth part, we are to understand a considerable part; called a tenth, probably in allusion to the ten kingdoms of which mystical Babylon was made up. This tenth part of the city fell; it fell, in the fente of falling off from Babylon, and being lost to its interest; and in the earthquake, meaning the great change which it produced, XI.

were flain of men seven thousand; in the original it is names of men, which may fignify persons, or individuals. Accordingly, Beza renders the words capita hominum, heads of men. But as John writes much in the Hebrew idiom, he most probably means men of name, that is, men of rank and diffinction; especially as the destruction of fuch a number of them, involving that of a much greater number of the common people, is an effect more adequate to the greatnels of the caute; only feven thoufand being too few to have fuflered in the tall of the tenth part of that vast city Their being flain, however, in the mydical language of prophecy, may, perhaps, only fignify, that they perished in respect of their rank, diftinction, and offices. The remnant, it is faid, were effrighted, and gave glory to the God of beaven: a plain evidence that

that this cannot be, as Mede thinks, the same prophecy with that of the fifth vial; for there " the people repented not, but blasphemed God, because of their plagues, and of their sores"

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This prophecy concludes with the following fignificant expressions;

Ver. 14. The second were is past; and, behold, the third were cometh quick-ly.

Words which clearly determine that the prophecy belongs to the time of the fixth trumpet, to which we shall see that several of the judgements of the third woe must likewise be referred.

This interesting prophecy, fo far as it respects the slaying of the witnesses, and their being revived, and CH AP.

and taken up to heaven in a cloud, feems still to wait for its accomplishment. We have feen, indeed, the temple measured, in the church's emerging from corruption, while the outer court was delivered over to the Gentiles to be trodden down of them: and we have teen faithful witnesses raised up from time to time, to tellify against the prevailing corruption; but we have not yet feen the extinction of the witneffes, or the last sufferings of the church, which the full meaning of the prophecy undoubtedly denotes: for, after the witnesses were flain, they revived, and were taken up to heaven in a cloud, in the fight of their enemies; and immediately there was an earthquake, and the feventh trumpet founded, and the kingdoms of this world became the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; nothing that has

has yet occurred in history comes up to the meaning of this description. The flaying of the witnesses did not take place, in the fense of this prophecy, even in the dreadful persecution and slaughter of the Albigenfes, in the beginning of the 13th century; these were indeed true witnesses for Christ, and the war against them was unquestionably made by the beaft; yet we cannot fix the accomplishment of the prophecy here, were it for no other reaton, but that it does not agree to the period to which the prophecy refers. The prophecy makes the flaying of the witneffes to happen towards the end of their mourning testimony, and when they were about to put off their fackcloth; but the perfecution of the Albigenfes was at the very beginning of that period, and was the first open persecution of the Z z witnesses,

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witnesses by the Romish church. Neither could this flaying of the witnesses be faid to take place at the martyrdom of John Huss and Jerom of Prague, though that was more the deed of the Romish church than the former, being appointed by a general council; in which fentence, that church may be confidered as condemning, and killing, all the faithful witnesses of Christ, both before and after. There is even another very remarkable circumflance in this case: which is, that this fame council of Constance, by which those two holy confessors were committed to the flames, fat three years and a half, during which time the dead bodies of the witnesses might well be faid to have lain in the street of the great city; the Synod, all the while, perfifting in the injustice and violence with which

which they had treated those good CHAP. men, and vindicating their own conduct in the most shameless manner. Nay farther, immediately after the Synod was diffolved, there witnesses might be faid to be restored to life again; their disciples occasioning great commotions in Bohemia, renouncing the communion of the Romish church, and all subjection to the Pope, whom they openly called the great Antichrift, and defending themselves against the emperor Sigifmond, who made war upon them in support of the Romish church; in which, when he and his party faw that they could not prevail, they invited the Bohemian brethrento a general council at Basil, to plead their cause: the council, after hearing their complaints, judged it expedient, for the fake of peace, to redress most of their grievances: this

this promife, however, they did not fulfil; in confequence of which, new, and greater, disturbances arose; till at length the anathemas of the Pope were thundered forth against them, but without effect; for they still refused all subjection to him. With much propriety, therefore, might it now be faid, that the tenth part of the city fell, when the kingdom of Bohemia thus dared to throw off the Papal yoke. So far, the learned Vitringa thinks, all the circumstances of this history accord with the prophetical defcription. But it is not easy to suppose, that a general council of Antichrist's should here receive the appellation of beaven, a term applied in this prophecy, to the true church, in contradiffinction to that false and corrupt one. The 1260 days, or three years and a half, at the end of which

which, the witnesses were to be flain, this learned expositor understands to denote three jubilean years and an half, making 172 years, which he computes from the end of the Papal war against the Albigenfes, to the Council of Constance But this interpretation is quite inadmiffible; the worthy author not reflecting that the 1260 days can never be converted, upon the principle of a day for a year, into any other term than twelve hundred and fixty common years; nor is there a fingle inflance of any fuch year as a jubilean year, to be found in the whole course of this prophecy; not to say that the period itself is wrong computed, as it ought to commence at the beginning, and not at the end, of the Papal war against the Albigenses; that war being a time of great perfecution and fuffering, when

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when the witnesses must be supposed to have prophefied in fackcloth, as well as afterwards. The ingenious interpreter, however, finds himfelt obliged at length to relinquish the above exposition, for this strong reason, that the cruel martyrdom of those two holy men, was not the last perfecution of the church by Antichrift, which the prophecy plainly supposes it to have been. The fame objection holds against any subsequent period of her sufferings that has yet occurred, whether at the Reformation, the Parisian massacre, the revocation of the edict of Nantes, or any other.

As this prophecy, then, remains to be fulfilled in the future fufferings of the church from the hand of Antichrist, it confirms the opinion of those pious men, who have thought that his power and tyranny will yet prevail; that the true church will fuffer much from his implacable enmity, and religion be brought to a very low ebb. It must indeed be acknowledged, that appearances, at prefent, are against this opinion Antichrist's dominion feems greatly declined, and the progress of knowledge threatens its speedy destruction. We learn from experience, however, that fuch appearances are not to be built upon. Worldly power may forcibly obstruct the progress of knowledge, and unforfeen events revive the influence of the Man of fin. After many awful judgements poured out upon him, we shall still fee him, under the fixth vial, uniting with the dragon, and gathering together, by his influence, the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to fight in his cause. This shews what great

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great power Antichrist shall have immediately before his total overthrow. About that time then, probably, we may look for the slaying of the witnesses, as described in this prophecy; for we know it shall be a time of great difficulty and danger to the saints. Therefore, our Lord sayeth, "Behold I come as a thief, Blessed is he that watcheth."

THE

THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

Ver. 15. And the seventh angel CHAP. founded; and there were great voices in heaven, faying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Ver. 16. And the four and twenty elders, which fat before God on their feats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God.

Ver 17. Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

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Ver.

Ver. 18. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name. Small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth

Ver. 10. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, and great hail.

The founding of the feventh trumpet introduces an entire new flate of things; the triumph of religion, and the reign of righteoufness and peace. Upon this occasion the four and twenty elders, who had long beheld it in prospect, fall down in humble prostration before God, and perform an act of solemn adoration

ation and thankigiving to the great Almighty, for the bright difplay of his power, and juffice, and faithfulnets, which is here exhibited. They fay, likewife, for the nations were angry; they raged at the profpect of their own approaching ruin, and fet themselves against the Lord and nis anointed, making the last effort to oppose the kingdom of Christ: and thy wrath, that great and terrible wrath of the Lord, by which the enemies of Christ, and of his people, were to be destroyed, is come: and the time of the dead that they should be judged, meaning the dead martyrs, who had been flain for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus; the time was now arrived when they should be vindicated and avenged: when his fervants the prophets, meaning those, who, by their faithful warnings, had prescrived many

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many from corruption, should be rewarded; when their characters should be honoured; and they should be comforted after all the fufferings they had endured; and when all that feared the name of the Lord, both small and great, should be in estimation; while destruction should seize upon those who destroyed the earth by their perfecuting cruelties; that wicked race being then extinguished, that the people of God might delight themselves in the abundance of peace. This vision further informs us, that the temple of God in heaven was opened, intimating, that the pure and spiritual nature of the church, as laid down in the word of God, was then clearly underflood; and there was feen in his temple the ark of bis testament, intimating, that the true doctrine concerning Christ, here mystically

mystically represented by the ark, should be then clearly taught and believed: or rather, that the faithfulness of God to his covenant, in delivering his people out of all their troubles, and making them to rejoice and triumph over their enemies, should then be made manifest: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great bail; these are prophetical emblems of any extraordinary appearances of the Divine Majesty, and power, and presence, in taking vengeance on the wicked, and working deliverance for the faints

With respect to the accomplishment of this prophecy; there is every reason to conclude that it is still future; it is certainly posterior to the killing of the witnesses, in the former prophecy, which we CHAP. XI. CHAP.

have feen remains still to be accomplished in the future sufferings of the church from the hand of Antichrist; and we cannot suppose, with good Mr. Durham and others, that the feventh trumpet founded at the time of the reformation as then the period commenced, which was gradually to iffue in the destruction of Antichrift, and the prosperity and glory of the church; for, at the killing of the witnesses, the church must suffer a still deeper decline than she has ever yet experienced; and notwithstanding all the reformation the boatts of, the principle upon which the is constructed, makes her too much a worldly kingdom, to accord with the pure and spiritual character of the millenium church.

VISION

VISION OF THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN.

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Ver. 1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

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Under the emblem of a woman, the Christian church is here unquestionably represented. Her appearance was splendid and glorious; she was clothed with the sun, the rays of that orb covering her like a garment; intimating, that she owed all her magnificence and excellency to the Sun of Righteousness himself, and that the light of heavenly truth, which

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which was to be differented by her, was derived from him alone. She is likewife defcribed with the moon under her feet, denoting, that the long night of shadowy ceremonial was over; and as having upon ber head a crown of twelve stars, by which the precious apostolic doctrine, which she held forth as her peculiar glory, is mystically represented. Can we doubt that the apostle now beheld the church, in her native purity and luftre, before she was contaminated by the world, or difgraced with its affected ornaments, when he describes her with the folar light for her garment, and the stars of heaven for the jewels of her crown. This last circumstance, that she were a crown upon her head, likewise sufficiently intimates that she was destined to triumph, notwithstanding all the injury and oppression

oppression which she was first to CHAP. fuffer. And we learn, not obscurely, from the shining jewels of her crown, the manner in which she shall obtain her triumph, that it shall be by the all-vanquishing power of the apostolic doctrine; when it shall dart its piercing rays over every land, and bring the world in Subjection under it. This whole appearance the apostle considers as a great fign, having fome-

Ver. 2. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

thing very portentous, as well as

wonderful, in it.

The child which is here alluded to, is no other than the deep mysterious truth of falvation, which the was then to bring forth, under Bbb all

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all the throes and agonies of the feverest perfecution. This last circumstance is most graphically represented, by another portentous fign which the apostle beheld:

Ver. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having feven heads, and ten horns, and feven crowns upon his heads

Ver. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

This ravenous and frightful monster appeared in the form of a great red dragon: but he was distinguished from all others of the kind, and seemed rather to resemble some of the sabulous monsters of antiquity;

quity; for he had feven heads and ten borns: and another extraordinary circumstance in his appearance was, that he had feven crowns upon his beads. By this strange and norrible figure, there is no doubt that the cruel and perfecuting Roman empire is denoted. Its feven different forms of government, all feated in the fevenhilled, or feven-headed, city, are represented by his feven heads crowned with seven crowns. Its vast extent, and its tremendous power are reprefented, both by his enormous fize, and the ten hoins which he bore; and its cruel and perfecuting fpirit, by his red or bloody colour. That both his fize and power were enormous and terrible, we have the most assomishing proof from the following incident; that with one fweep of his tail he drew the third part of the flars of heaven, and did cast them

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them to the earth. But although the Roman empire is very naturally represented by this emblem, it is evident from ver. 9. that it is so shadowed forth, chiefly, because it was animated by the great dragon, that old ferpent called the devil and Satan, and therefore all his insidious malice and agency are to be taken into view. It was then by this, his grand instrument and agent, that the dragon flood before the woman, who was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born.

Ver. 5. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

This child, mystically representing the precious truths of the gofpel, appeared strong and manly, notwithnotwithstanding all the hardships of his infant condition: and he was afterwards to rule all nations as with a rod of iron, bringing them at length into entire subjection under him. About this child the divine care was peculiarly employed: He is faid to have been caught up unto God, and to his throne, as to a place of absolute fafety: intimating, that the pure and heavenly doctrine should be preserved secure, amidst the greatest dangers that could arife, either from the undermining acts of pretended friends, or from the daring attacks of professed enemies.

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Ver. 6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Here we are informed that, notwithstanding all the malice and fury

fury of the dragon, the true church herfelf should likewite be preferved upon the earth; although indeed, for a long time, in a very obtenre and oppressed condition; for the woman fled into the wilderness, an expression denoting a retreat from enemies, and danger; and there, as in a place prepared of God for her, the was wonderfully protected and fultained, for the space of one thousand two hundred and threefcore years; a day, as almost all expositors agree, being here put for a year.

Ver. 7. And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels;

Ver. 8. And prevailed not; neither was their place any more in heaven.

Ver.

Ver. o And the great dragon was CHAP. east out. that old serpent called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: be was east out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

We learn from these verses, that, during this period, a hard conflict was maintained by the faithful followers of Christ against their enemies. This was reprefented to the mind of this apostle under the awful figure of armies fighting in the fky. On the one fide was Vichael, the prince of the people of God, the captain of falvation, attended by his angels; on the other fide, the dragon and his angels. But these were unequal to the contest, and, far from prevailing, were driven totally off the field, fo that they had no place in beaven any more. This evidently denotes, in the language

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of prophecy, a diminution of power. and a declension of authority; and that too, as immediately appears, in a humiliating degree; for the great dragon himfelt, even that old ferpent, the origin of all mischief and evil, who is emphatically fliled the devil, the calumniator, the accufer of the people of God, and Satan, their inveterate foe, who, to use the language of Daniel in another case, bad waxed great, in the instruments of his power and his malice, even to the host of heaven, he was cast down to the earth, and these his angels, with him.

Ver. 10. And I heard (continues the apostle,) a loud voice faying in heaven, Now is come falvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethres.

brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before God, day and night.

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Ver 11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Ver. 12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

The victory, which the church obtained under her glorious king and head, it is natural to suppose, would not pass uncelebrated. But it is remarkable that the song of triumph was heard only in heaven; probably for this reason, that the saints on earth had new sufferings to encounter. Nevertheless, it was the period of the commencement

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of the church's deliverance, and therefore, with great propriety, it was announced and celebrated, as we have already heard, by the faints (a) above, who have more extensive views of the plans of Providence than we. This was intended for the encouragement and comfort of the church militant on earth, at the time to which it refers. The manner in which they obtained this victory is likewife celebrated, and the heroifm which they displayed; for, continues this heavenly fong, They overcame kim by the

(a) Though this fong feems to have struck the ear of the apostle as uttered by one loud voice, yet, there is no room to doubt that it arose from the united and harmonious voices of many; probably, of the whole redeemed society in heaven: that it was not sung by angels is evident, for they who uttered it speak of the saints on earth as their brethren; but we no where read of such a relation substituting between angels and men.

the blood of the Lamb, by the faith of which they were supported and animated, under their greatest sufferings; and by the word of their testimony, which carried an energy along with it that overpowered the enemy: and, penetrated by the lively fentiments of redeeming grace, they loved not their lives unto the death, but cheerfully refigned them in their master's cause. In consequence of this fignal victory, and the prospects of providence which it laid open, the celeitial spirits, consisting both of angels and of glorified faints, are called to rejoice, fo that the heavens themselves might refound. But the concluding part of this fong gives intimation to the inhabitants of the earth and of the fea, that the devil was come down unto them in great wrath, knowing that his time was but flort. This is, by far, the most difficult

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difficult part to explain. By the inhabitants of the earth and of the fea, we cannot here understand the enemies of God and of his people, as is commonly supposed: these are certainly not the objects of the devil's perfecuting rage: his fury is pointed against the church; and therefore the true fervants of God must be the persons who are here intended. The defeat and degradation which he had fuffered on their account, tended only to exasperate him the more against them; and the apprehension which he felt that his reign would be but short, inflamed his refentment to a high degree. But why are they described as the inhabitants of the earth and of the fea, which has been thought to indicate that they were of a worldly character? This is the circumstance which has misled expositors. It is, however, only intended to mark the place of their abode, as within the limits of his authority; either more immediately within the body of his empire, or in the diffant or maritime provinces.

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Ver. 13. And when the dragon faw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

Ver. 14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Ver. 15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

The effects of the dragon's enraged malice, and the future fufferings

ferings of the church arising from it, are here most strikingly described. He immediately fets himfelf to perfecute the woman which had brought forth the man child. He had, however, no fmall difficulty in accomplishing his aim: for, as will afterwards appear, the woman, long before this time, was in her wilderness state, and therefore the expressions that are here made use of, ought to be thus rendered; But to the woman had been given (two wings of a great eagle, so that she had sled into the wilderness, into her place, from the face of the ferpent: and there the was nourished for a time, and times, and half time, that is for three years and a halt: each year being, agreeable to ancient computation, 360 days; and

⁽a) The aprile is here put for the plup-rect, as in feveral other places: fee Grotius on Matt. xiv. 3. and on Rev. xix. 19.

and a day being assumed for a year, makes the whole amount to 1262 years; the precise time that was formerly specified. Nothing can be more lively and beautiful than to represent the flight of the woman, as performed by wings of a great eagle. It is the emblem of a safe retreat; and has fomething very tender and affecting in it, when we confider it in allusion to the wonderful providence of God towards his ancient people; when, in his own emphatical language, he bare them upon eagles wings, and carried them all the days of old. Now the church was removed out of the ferpent's reach, and had lain concealed for ages from his fight. But he at length descried her, and in the fury of his malice, he cast out of his mouth water, as a flood, making armies, the instruments of his vengeance, to rufh

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Ver. 16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

Incidents occurred in the conduct of providence, which as effectually checked the progress of his armies, as if the earth had opened its mouth and swallowed them up: and thus the woman was preferved amidst all his attempts against her.

Ver. 17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her feed, which keep the

the commandments of God, and have the CHAP. testimony of Jesus Christ.

This new difappointment added fuel to his rage, which he could now express only by perfecuting those of her feed who still remained lurking in different parts of his dominions. These were distinguished from others, by not following the commandments of men in matters of religion, but the commandments of God; and by faithfully adhering, both in principle and practice, to the fimplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus, amidst all the corruption which prevailed around them.

There are fcarcely any of the visions in this long feries of prophecy, which have been more mifunderstood and misinterpreted, than this which we have been furveying. It is almost universally referred to the Ddd

the perfecution of the church under pagan Rome, to her apparent advancement and triumph in the time of Constantine, and to the adverse incidents which occurred between his reign and the rife of Antichrist. One should have thought that the inconfiftencies of this interpretation were too obvious, for ingenious and learned men to have either proposed or adopted it. Upon this principle, the apostle, under the notion of a prophetical vision, is made to fee what was then past, namely, the fufferings which the Christian church had endured prior to the time when it was exhibited. He is made to fee the Roman empire, with feven crowned heads or governments, when it should have appeared only with fix; this vision having nothing to do with the feventh, as that head did not arife, according to this interpretation, till

the period here referred to was over. Then they, who thus interpret the prophecy, are obliged to break the order of the narration itself, by fuppoling that the woman's flight is introduced in the fixth verte, not in its proper place, as that event, according to them, was posterior to the war in heaven, which is afterwards mentioned, when the devil was cast out into the earth, in the time of Constantine, and his place was not found in heaven any more; although not long after he rose to greater power than ever. Finally, they interpret the short time which was allotted him for perfecuting the Christians, atter he was cast down into the earth, to be the whole length of the reign of Antichrift, no less than one thousand two hundred and threefcore years; which is certainly very improperly called fhort, as it is more than dou-

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ble the time in which he had formerly been permitted to exercife his cruckies upon them. All thereinconfidencies and contradictions, do unavoidably occur upon this interpretation; a fure evidence that it cannot give the fense of this vision.

The truth is, that the vision belongs chiefly to the times of Antichrist himielt: but as some of the circumitances allude to the pagan Roman empire, therefore it is carried on under one general emblem, which may very properly reprefent them both. If we fo understand it, the former inconfiltencies and embarraffments will all vanish, and we shall contemplate its important discoveries, in a clear and fatistying light. We fee the difficulty of propagating the gospel truth through the wide extent of the Roman empire, under the notion of a woman travailing

travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. Her diffress must, at this time, have been occasioned by the dragon in his pagan character, who is reprefented as threatening and annoying her, and lying in wait to devour her child when he should be born. As foon as the birth was accomplished, in the downfal of paganism, and the triumph of Christianity in the time of Constantine, we behold the affliction and obscurity into which the church was quickly to fall, and under which she was long to continue in the days of Antichrift, represented by the woman's flight into the wilderness, that she might escape the effects of his infidious malice. Here now, it is evident, he must have carried on his designs against her, under the semblance of a Christian character, though it was, in reality, that same character of Annchrift

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Antichrift, in which he afterwards openly appeared, when he acted under his teventh head. And there feems to be a peculiar propriety in introducing him here in this his last, and most monstrous character, as manifesting, before hand, his enmity against the church, in order to intimate that now was the period when Antichrift's influence commenced, and when the foundation of his kingdom began to be laid. Hence, likewife, the church would be fignificantly warned of the fufferings she was to meet with under his tremendous reign, that she might begin to prepare for her wilderness state. As a further proof that the dragon was intended, in this vision, to represent the proud Romish Antichristian, as well as pagan tyranny, we fee him not only with feven heads, but with feven crowns, having the feventh head crowned

crowned as well the reft; which was most exactly and literally verified, when Pope Damafus II. first caused himself to be crowned, a ceremony which has fince been observed by all his fuccessors, with this only difference, that, from the time of Urban V. the crown was changed from a fingle, to a triple one, to flew that Christ's vicar on earth is possessed of a threefold power, the pontifical, imperial, and royal. The fame thing is likewise evident from this other circumstance, that the dragon fwept down with his tail the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth; which is but of forced application to the imperial government, upon any of the interpretations which have been commonly offered; but if we understand it of the papal dominion, the fense is natural and easy; for then, this part of the vision will be

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of the fame import with Daniel's little born, by whom three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; meaning the Grecian power in Italy, and that of the Lombards, and Franks, all which he deftroyed to make way for himself. These are here reprefented by the third part of the stars of heaven, three being the nearest to the third part of ten that can be expressed in whole numbers. This is a circumftance too important to be omitted, where the progress of Antichristian ambition and tyranny is meant to be defcribed; and yet, if we explain it away from this passage, where it is so clearly expressed, we shall look for it in vain in any other part of these prophecies. From all these observations, and indeed from the whole strain and spirit of this vision, it is evident, not only that the dragon denotes Rome Antichristian, as well

as Rome pagan, but the opposition

he gave to the woman before the was delivered of her child, belongs to her pagan character; whereas, that which he occasioned afterwards, can only be understood of him in his Antichristian character, because the times of his pagan authority were now no more. We have feen already, how fhe brought forth her manly off-pring, in the doctrine of heavenly truth which she issued forth into the world, and which was finally to bring all nations in subjection under it; and we are given to understand, that it was taken immediately into the divine protection, and preferved as fafe

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amidst all the errors which afterwards arose, as if it had been taken up to God, and to his throne In the mean time the church was fast removing into the wilderness, where

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two hundred and threescore prophetical days, meaning the years of her exile, and of her forrow. During this period, the battle in heaven is fought, by which the audacity and fury of Antichrift, and his fatal repulse and degradation, are exhibited in a very striking manner. This interesting and astonishing fight was most feafonably introduced, both for a warning and a confolation to the church; that she might prepare for the fufferings which awaited her; and, that she might hold fast her confidence amidst the cruelties of her enemies, affured that she was soon to be crowned with victory and triumph.

In the following part of the vision, we behold this interesting fight exemplified and verified upon the earth. For when the dragon faw that he was cast unto the earth, he immediately set himself to persecute the woman. Here

it is of chief importance, to fix the time when the dragon was caft down. It could not be in the time of Constantine; for it could not then be faid that his place was not found in heaven any more, as we see him, quickly after, rifing to a degree of power and influence beyond what he had ever formerly attained. must therefore seek for it in the stages of his declining authority, when he was exposed as Antichrist unto the eye of the world. And he was fo exposed, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, by the Waldenses and Albigenses, Chriftians inhabiting the vallies of Savoy, Piedmont and the South of France. They had then become very numerous; in confequence of which, his character, was, by great multitudes, held in abhorrence, and his authority treated with contempt. This exasperated his fury against the

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the woman, whom he had not lately perceived; for she had been hid for ages in her wilderness state; but he now discovered her in her retreat, and, as the vision represents it, cast out of his mouth water, as a flood after her, to destroy her. In Scripture, the inroads of a powerful and enraged enemy are admirably depicted by an overflowing torrent, which carries devastation and ruin wherever it comes. Such was the dreadful calamity with which the church was now threatened, when she was to be found only among the obscure inhabitants of the vallies. Pope Innocent III. excited both princes and people to exterminate them by a crufade. No less than five hundred thousand, it is afferted, under the fign of the crofs, marched forth against them; and the murders which they committed, of perfons of every age and condition, are too shocking

to relate. At length, however, ac- CHAP. cording to the striking representation in the vision, the earth helped the woman. The wars in Italy between the Pope and the Emperor giving a different direction to the papal force. fwallowed up the flood; and other lands afforded the church, for a time at least, a more secure and peaceful abode.

But the greatest fall which the dragon experienced was at the time of the reformation; and then too his anger was kindled into a flame. The emperor Charles V. and the Roman pontiff entered into an alliance for the extirpation of that alarming herefy, as it was called. The church was again to be expofed to the fury of her enemies. The dominions of the Elector of Saxony, one of her best supporters, were invaded in his absence. His army was afterwards defeated by the em-

peror

peror at Mulhausen, and he himself made prifoner. The church was then fuffering feverely, from the oppressions of the emperor's brother in Bohemia. But the earth now, in a very remarkable manner. belped the woman. Maurice, the invader and usurper of Saxony, broke his alliance with the emperor, entered into a treaty with Henry II. of France, traversed the upper Germany with his troops, every where restoring the rejected ministers to their churches, marched rapidly to Inspruck in order to seize the emperor, who with difficulty faved himfelf by flight. This extraordinary incident, iffued in the peace of Paffau, and the fecurity of the proteftants in Germany. But still the rage of the dragon was unabated. Baffled in his attempts to recover the revolted states and kingdoms, he went to make war with the true followers

followers of Jesus, many of whom remained in different parts of his dominions. This he did, by the cruel persecutions which he every where raised against them, by various massacres which he instigated; parricularly the horrid massacre of Paris; and by the permanent massacres of the infernal tribunal of the inquisition (2).

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(a) The general judgement of commentators upon this vision is, that it represents the state of the church prior to the reign of Constantine the Great, her persecutions under the pagan Roman emperors, her deliverance and exaltation when the empire became Christian, as it is commonly expressed, and when Satan, who had so long ruled there, was cast out of his feat, and similarly, her subsequent state of obscurity and suffering till Antichrist arose. They differ, however, considerably in their interpretation of the several parts of the vision. By the child which the woman brought forth, Markius understands Christ himself; and by his being taken up to God and to his throne, his actual ascension in heaven. But

when the apostle wrote, this was long past, and therefore cannot be the import of this prophetical vision. Forbes, Mede, Durham, Waple, and others, understand by the man child, Christian converts, thus making the mother and the child to be the fame; and by his being caught up to God and to his throne, they understand the exalted state of the church, in the time of Constantine, though there cannot be a doubt, that her finking down into corruption is from thence to be dated. The war in heaven between Michael and the Dragon, they interpret of the struggle between Christianity and paganism, under the heathen Roman emperors, and the fufferings which the church then endured; although, by the scheme which they lay down, the same thing was just now represented by the woman in labour. The water which the dragon cast out of his mouth, and the earth helping the woman, they think, denote the Arian and other herefies, which fprung up in the church, the tide of which was stemmed by the decrees of general councils by which they were condemned. But Waple, Bishop Newton, and others interpret the water, of the incursions of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire; while they differ much about the manner in which they were fwallowed up by the earth. I only further take notic of the opinion of the learned Vitringa. He interprets the

man child, of Constantine the Great, in which he is followed by Bishop Newton; although that emperor retained the heathen office of Pontifix Maximus till his death, favoured the Arians, perfecuted the orthodox, and was not even baptized into the Christian faith till the time of his last sickness. He likewise interprets his being caught up to God and to his throne, of his being raifed, by a remarkable disposition of Providence to the throne of the empire. He understands the woman's flying into the wilderness, of the church being moved to the west among the barbarous people, where she had not formerly a place; and confiders this as respecting three different periods: 1st, The time when arianism prevailed: 2d. The time when monasteries were founded in the west, which were a retreat to the pious from the influence of furrounding corruption: 3d, The time when the church, having disappeared in the east, was preferved in Germany and France. He explains the water which the serpent cast forth after the woman, of the inroads of the Saracens into Spain and France; and the earth opening her mouth and fwallowing it up, of the complete and terrible victory which Charles Martel obtained over them in the year 732; which effectually obstructed their further progress in Europe.

Fff

VISION OF THE BEAST WITH SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS.

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Ver. r. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of Blasphemy.

Ver. 2. And the beaft which I faw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his feat, and great authority.

It must be evident to every reader, that this is a new vision which the apostle begins to describe. He

is now placed upon the fand of the CHAP. fea, in a convenient station for viewing the monftrous animal which was to fpring up out of it. He beheld him when he arose: bis body was like that of a leopard; but, besides the leopard's head, there were fix other heads attached to its the forms of which he does not defcribe (a). But he tells us that this terrible creature had the feet of a bear: and, probably, in his feventh, or leopard's head, (the only head with which the vision is properly concerned), he had the mouth of a lion

(a) The arrangement of the heads has been differently conceived of by expositors. Many suppose the seventh head to have been placed in the midst. But the order in which Mede represents them is much more fimply and ingeniously fanci-He supposes them to have grown out one above another, in the order of the governments, every new government superfeding the former, fo that the feventh head flood above all the reft.

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lion. He had ten borns, planted, as I conceive, upon this feventh, or last head: because, at the time to which the vision refers, they did not belong to any of the other. Finally, this fearful apparition rose up out of the fea, by which, I prefume, we are to understand, a mixed multitude of people, fuch as composed the vast extent of his empire when he usurped the government over them (4). Here then we have a monster of fo singular a character,

for

⁽a) Rifing out of the fea, cannot be understood, as is commonly supposed, to denote rising out of the convulsions of states, or the commotions of the people; in opp fition to the two borned beaft which is supposed to have grown filently out of the earth. If any passage could support such an interpretation, it would be Daniel vii. in which the four great monarchies are reprefented as rifing out of the ftormy fea: but the prophet afterward informs us, that they rife out of the earth.

for fierceness, and vigour, and ra- CHAP. pacity, that the strongest instance of these which nature furnishes, are the constituent parts of his compofition. When we look into the ancient prophecies, and particularly into those of Daniel, in which emblems of this nature are introduced and explained, we cannot entertain a doubt, that a great tyrannical power is here fignificantly reprefented: And, that this power is Papal Rome in all the extent of its policy and domination, the feven heads, denoting the feven hilled city and its feven forms of government; the ten horns, denoting ten kingdoms in subjection undertit; and the name of Blasphemy upon one (2) of his heads.

are

(a) This is certainly the sense in which we are to understand the expression: for, prior to Antichrist, blosphemy did not belong to the Roman government more than to any other; all of them being CHAP. XIII. are palpable and striking proofs. To complete the description, we are told, that the dragon, meaning that old serpent called the devil, and Satan, as he is expressly characterized in the preceding chapter, gave bim his power and his feat, and great authority, raising him to sovereign dominion, and making him the great instrument of his power and agency through the wide extent of the Roman empire in the west.

Ver. 3. And I faw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly

being pagan and idolatrous, the Jewish only excepted It is therefore an expression of the same kind with many others which have been taken notice of by scripture critics: such as when Jephtha is said to have been buried in the cities of Gilead, that is, in one of them; and where Christ is spoken of as riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass, when only one of them could be meant.

deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beaft.

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This, as will afterwards appear, was the fixth, or imperial head, which was wounded to death, when Augustulus was dethroned by the king of the Heruli, and the imperial government destroyed at Rome. But this deadly wound was healed, when both the magnificence, and power, of the imperial government were reftored, though under fomewhat of a different form, in the feventh, or papal head; and fuch was then the influence of the beaft, that, as by a kind of univerfal enchantment, he drew all the world in admiration after him.

Ver. 4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like

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like unto the beaft? Who is able to make war with him?

This admiration degenerated into abject and idolatrous submiffion; for they worshipped the beast, and, in doing so, they in effect worshipped the dragon also, that is the devil himself, who gave him power. Their very language is the language of idolatry: They say, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? ascribing to him, peerless might, and grandeur.

Ver. 5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

This defcribes his arrogant pretentions to fupereminent dignity, his assuming lofty and blasphemous titles, his laying claim even to divine prerogatives; and, what is a great great and inexplicable mystery, his being allowed to prosper and to prevail (3), to the great injury of the faithful, for the space of forty-two prophetical months, making the same period that was formerly mentioned of 1260 years.

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Ver. 6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

His impious boasting rose to such a pitch, that it may with great propriety be called blassphemy against God, and against his name. He likewise execrated his tabernacle, that is to say, his church, on earth; which was then in her wilderness state, in Ggg which

(a) It has been repeatedly and justly observed by expositors, that $\pi_{010\pi\pi}$ is to be understood here in this large and emphatical sense, as Daniel used the corresponding word in his prophecies: see Dan. viii. 12. and xi. 7.

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which God dwells as in a tabernacle (*): and he degraded the character of the *faints and angels in heaven*, by making them interceffors with God, and objects of idolatrous worship.

Ver. 7. And it was given unto him to make war with the faints, and to over-come them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

He was permitted to exercife his cruelties against the faints, to such a degree, as appeared almost to destroy

(a) See 2 Cor. vi. 16. Though I will not affirm, in opposition to worthy expositors, that the spirit of prophecy had not an eye here to the absurd, as well as impious, doctrine of transubstantiation; yet I prefer the sense given in the comment as more warrantable from scripture; because I do not find that our Lord's glerieus body, to which the above doctrine relates, is there represented as a tabernacle.

stroy them: and his tyranny reached to a vast extent, over the various kindreds, and tongues, and nations, into which the Roman empire had been divided.



Ver. 8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

This is the confequence of his univerfal domination: the people every where, through his wide extended empire, were to be brought into the most humiliating subjection: their very minds and confeiences were to be enslaved, and they were all to look up unto him as a God upon the earth: the redeemed of the Lord alone excepted, whose names were registered, from the foundation of the world, in the

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book of life of the Lamb that was flain (a).

Ver. 9. If any man have an ear, let him hear.

This is a folemn note of attention to every perfon of spiritual discernment. The truths which have been represented are awfully affecting. That corruption should spread its influence so wide, and that the faints should be so oppressed by a powerful and unrelenting soe, afford indeed but very melancholy reslections. But let the Christian look

(*) Let the thoughtful reader confider, whether it is not more to the purpose of this vision, to give the reason why the saints were preserved pure in the midst of surrounding corruption, in their having been chosen for a holy treasure to the Lord from the soundation of the world, than to speak of Christ as slain typically in the sacrifices that were offered since the fall of man, and then judge which is the sense of this passage.

look forward to the end of these calamities, and ponder what the spirit of prophecy immediately subjoins:



Ver. 10. He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints.

Then he shall perceive that this haughty persecuting power shall be brought down to destruction, and the people of God delivered from his hands; and when it is considered that those who maintain their integrity in the midst of all these temptations, have the witness in themselves that they are destined to happiness, what can be a stronger encouragement to exercise patience, and to place their trust and considence in the Lord.

Nothing can be more evident, than CHAP. XIII. than that this monftrous animal reprefents the different kingdoms into which the Roman empire was broken down and divided, all harmonized and united under the fovereign pontiff, notwithstanding their different and fometimes oppofite interests. This produced a government of fo strange and singular a nature, that one should think it fearcely possible to mistake the meaning of a description, so remarkably adapted to all its distinguishing characters. The feat of this government is plainly fixed at Rome, the feven hilled city. It was the feventh form of government which had existed in that city. It was exercifed over ten different kingdoms into which the empire had been divided; which have been enumerated, though with fome trifling differences, by almost all expositors. Its authority was the greatest

greatest that ever the world beheld; for not only the people in general, but the greatest princes and monarchs, were in absolute subjection to it; and even their crowns and kingdoms entirely at its disposal. The head of this government laid claim to divine perfection: nay, to use the language of scripture, sitting in the temple of God, he exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; and, pretending to be the father and the guide of the church, he perfecuted its genuine members with the most unrelenting

When we look into the papal history, we see these characters exhibited in a long detail. The bishop of Rome early aspired to power and pre-eminence; and his influence so rapidly increased, that, before the end of the sixth century, it became an object of anxiety and apprehension

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prehension to the Roman emperor himself. In the year 606, the title of universal bishop was confered upon him by Phocas, an execrable tyrant and parricide. But he had exercifed the prerogative long before. The rich and extensive patrimony which belonged to the See of Rome, enabled the Roman Pontiff to maintain a splendor, suited to the dignity he had affumed. What contributed much to his aggrandifement, in this early period, was the weak and impolitic conduct of the emperor Leo Hauricus, in issuing an edict against the worship of images, and requiring them every where to be pulled down. The enforcing of this edict kindled a war in Italy: the emperor was exafperated: Gregory II. at that time Pope, whom his jealoufy had imprudently threatened, and whose life he had attempted, strenuously exhort-

ed the people to continue stedfast in CHAP. the faith. Their spirits were inflamed; the cities of Italy revolted, and the Romans, choosing magistrates for themselves, became a diffinct body politic, with the Pope at their head. In the year 756, Pepin, king of France, put the Pope in possession of the exarchate of Ravenna and Pentapolis, a confiderable track of country now known by the name of Marca d'Ancona. But it was not till the year 876, that he became a temporal prince; when the fovereignty of those parts was yielded to St. Peter by Charles the bald. Yet it was not from his becoming a temporal prince, a circumstance upon which commentators lay fo much stress, that he derived that extraordinary power which he possessed. It was from the progress of superstition and the in-Hhh fluence

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fluence he thereby obtained over the minds of the people.

So great was the weight of his authority, that, feveral years before his getting the grant of the territories already mentioned, the crown of France, in consequence of his decision, was transferred from one race of kings unto another; and, in the year 796, he had the address to raise Charlemaigne to the imperial dominion, by putting an imperial crown upon his head while he was kneeling at the altar, and holding him forth to the people as crowned by the hand of God. These however were only the infant exertions of his ambition. He afterwards laid claim to infallibilty, and to fupreme and univerfal dominion. He affumed the most blasphemous titles; most holy, and most blessed; the lord of the universe, the father of kings, and the light of the world.

And

And fuch was his infolence of pow- CHAP. er, that we find him, at length, dethroning and excommunicating princes, and threatening with the feverest punishments, all who ventured to dispute his authority, or difregard his commands. Thekings and potentates of this world were now entirely at his beck. These he employed as the instruments of his fury, to execute his vengeance against the faints. The cruelties which he exercised upon them were unparalleled. Let the vallies of Piedmont and its neighbourhood, the forests of Germany, and almost every country in Europe, bear witness, what multitudes of innocent victims have fallen by his murderous hands. Indeed fuch was the horrid fuccess of his perfecutions, that, at one period, he feems to have almost exterminated the holy progeny from the earth; fo completely



pletely was the prophecy fulfilled, that he should make war with the faints and overcome them (a).

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popes,

(a) There is little diversity of opinion among expositors respecting the beast itself which this prophecy describes. They differ widely however about the head that was wounded, and the healing of his deadly wound. Mede, Durham, and Waple understand it of the fixth head, which they think was wounded to death in the fall of idolatry under the Christian emperors; and that it was healed by the restoration of idolatry under the papal dominion. Jurieu, Lowman, Napier, and Bishop Newton interpret its being wounded, of the fall of the imperial government at Rome. But the two former understand its being healed, of the revival of a fimilar government under the popes, while the two latter understand it of the empire being again restored under Charlemaigne. Against all these interpretations Vitringa objects, as Pareus had done before him, that they make the beaft to be wounded before he existed: He likewise thinks, that the head which was wounded, is that which must be healed. He further understands the feven heads of the beaft, to be seven

Popes, who diftinguished themselves, by raising the authority of the Romish church to the highest pitch, and by perfecuting the faints and triumphing over them. Of these, he thinks five were before the reformation, namely Gregory VII. Alexander III. Innocent III. Boniface VIII. and John XXII. two after the reformation, Paul III. and Paul V He supposes that Alexander III the first persecutor of the Waldenses, was the head that was wounded to death, in the feventeen years oppression which he suffered from the emperor Frederic Brazen Beard, as he was called; and particularly in the difastrous defeat of his allies and of the Romans, many thousands of whom perished by the arms of Frederic, while he himself with difficulty made his escape. But, after all, he observes, he triumphed over the emperor at Venice, who there threw himself at Alexander's feet, deprecated his vengeance, and worshipped him: and hence the papal authority immenfely in. creafed in the judgement of the people. Behold then, fays this learned expositor, the head of the beast wounded to death, and, contrary to all human expectation, healed.

VISION OF THE TWO HORNED BEAST.

CHAP XIII. Ver. 11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

This beaft, in like manner as the former, is to be understood of a body politic. He is represented with two horns like a lamb, denoting the twofold power which he assumed, of opening and shutting the gates of heaven and hell at his pleasure; and, delineating at the same time one of his principal features, that, under the colour of the most artless simplicity and mildness, he should have the audacity to speak like a dragon; discovering both his subtilty

tilty and his virulence as occasion required. He is further represented, as coming up out of the earth, which has been commonly understood, to denote his growing up in a filent and imperceptible manner, as a plant out of the ground. But the idea of the growth of a plant is certainly very incongruous to that of an animal afcending, or rifing up, out of the earth. Is it not fufficient for the purpose of this vision, while it also preserves the propriety of the figure, to suppose him making his appearance in a fituation which was fitted to supply plenty of provision to nourish him. This therefore, I conceive, is the natural and adequate interpretation. But if we are to push it to any further meaning, I should choose to underfland it as fignifying, that this extraordinary animal arose out of the rich temporalities which the clergy

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at that time enjoyed. This beaft appears likewise to be intimately connected, if not united, with the former: therefore it is added,

Ver. 12. And he exercised all the power of the first beast before him. and causeth the earth, and them which dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

The power of the first beast, which the other is here faid to exercise, must be understood of a power equal to that which was derived from the combined influence of the potentates of this world; and it was exercised before him, that is, in honour of him *; and was indeed the means by which he rose to his greatness. He likewise caused the inhitants

^{*} So the original word is used, Luke iv. 7. and it is the only sense in which it can here be understood.

bitants of the earth, wherever the influence of his enflaving doctrine extended, or the terrors of his threatenings reached, to worship the first beast, as he now appeared in a new and astonishing form, healed of his deadly wound, and beyond all expectation entering on the possession of sovereign and universal dominion.

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Ver. 13. And he doth great wonders, fo that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the fight of men.

Ver. 14. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

The wonders which he performed, however, were only false and ly-

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ing wonders. But he knew that, in those times of ignorance, they would produce the defired effect, in confounding the fenses of the people, fo that at length he might attempt his daring project of terrifying them outright, by appearing to bring down fire from heaven in their prefence. Nay, we are told, that by these pretended miracles, which he performed in honour of the beaft, he deceived to fuch a degree them that dwelt upon the earth, meaning the people under his influence, as to make them enter into his views, in making an image to the beaft, who was now beginning to live under another head, notwithstanding his former head being wounded to death. The word rendered image, in this place, feems to be used, to signify a model, or pattern, after which any thing is to be made (a); and fuch an i- CHAP. mage for the feven headed monster, we shall afterward observe, this lamb-like beaft did actually form (b). But what is very extraordinary, the pattern which he formed he had the faculty of endowing with life, or fpirit, that it could enforce its example, and carry it into effect. This extraordinary circumstance the apostle immediately describes;

Ver. 15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beaft, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

His

- (a) So the corresponding Hebrew term is used, Gen. i. 26. and in fome other passages.
- (b) When the people are faid to have made this image, the meaning can only be, that they confented to its formation; for we find that this beast gave life to the image, which he would never have done if it had not been of his own framing.



His speaking must here be underflood of commending, and magnifying himfelf; and all in reference to the character and domination of the beaft, which he was formed to raife and to support. Therefore it was necessary, that the people should pay a veneration to him. This he indifpenfably required; and he contrived that all who would not do fo, should be put to death It must not be forgotten, however, that this power, the image had not of himfelt, but it was communicated to him by the two-horned beaft; of the influence and tyranny of whofe character the two following verses complete the description.

Ver. 16. And he causeth all, both finall and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreweads:

Ver.

Ver. 17. And that no man might buy CHAP. or fell fave he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

The general meaning of this defcription is abundantly plain; that fuch was his intolerance and oppression, that no person, of whatever rank or condition he might be. could exercise even the common offices of civil life, without giving unequivocal evidence of his being a devoted flave to the feven headed monster, and to that system of tyranny and fuperstition which he maintained. This is what we are to understand by his mark, or his name, or the number of his name; and, as almost every expositor has observed, it is an allusion to the marks, or names, or numbers, that were worn by ancient idolaters, and foldiers, and flaves.



Ver. 18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

There is perhaps no part of these prophecies, where expositors have gone into a greater variety of opinions, than that which we have now been furveying. The general character, however, which it defcribes is fufficiently obvious. diffinguishing and prominent features may be clearly traced in the character and conduct of the Romish clergy, regarded in their official capacity. They appeared with the meekness and innocence of a lamb; while they betrayed all the cunning and audacity of the ferpent. In the garb of humility they carried on the plans of ambition and and in the femblance of fimplicity fecretly managed the great engines of fuperstition and tyranny. Let their history bear testimony to the truth of these affertions. Their leading object has been, to aggrandize their order, by exalting the temporal and fpiritual dominion of the head of their church. With this view they made men believe that their eternal falvation depended upon him; they exhibited him as a Deity upon earth; they ascribed to him characters which belong to God alone, and powers that extended to heaven and to hell. Confidered as partaking of this high authority, they were them felves regarded with the most profound submission, and obtained an unbounded influence over the minds of the people. They even afcribed to themselves the power of working miracles; and fo confidently was this power claimed,

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claimed, and fo generally was it allowed them, that it was commonly appealed to as a decifive proof that the church of Christ was to be found among them, and them alone. It is a most appropriate stroke therefore in the description of this beast that he doth great wonders, fo that he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of these miracles. Those miracles were most commonly performed through the intervention of relics. Relics, even fo early as the latter part of the fixth century, were held in great veneration. Dupin informs us that St. Gregory, who about that time filled the papal chair, refused to fend some to the empress Constantina; assuring her that they were not to be approached without terror; and giving her feveral inflances of their awful effects. Their interdicts, and indulgences, their absolutions, and excomunications, cations, were powerful engines in the hands of those artful and ambitious men, and, for many ages, were employed with consummate art, and daring effrontery, to fill the coffers, and consirm the domination of the church. By these they reached men of every rank and every character; they subjugated the lostiest minds, they over-awed the highest authorities, and thus raised up a supreme and universal CHAP.

To the aggrandizement of that monster the church-men effectually contributed by the image, or portrait, which they drew of him in the decrees of councils, in the canons of the church, and in the whole of the doctrine which they taught respecting him; all these tending to bring the powers of this world into harmonious subjection

empire under the feven headed

beaft.

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to the fovereign pontiff, as their fupreme and infallible head. To this image they gave life and vigour, by the ardour of superstition, and by the terror of anathemas; but last of all, by the infernal tribunal of the inquisition, by means of which they filled the minds of the people with conflernation and awe. This was the most dreadful engine of cruelty which had ever been invented. The defign of it was to prevent the teaching of herefy, even in private; and the means employed were tortures, which incarnate demons alone feemed capable of devising!

From the whole of this history it is evident, that every possible endeavour was made to prevent any person from enjoying the common benefit of society, or even of life itself, without an abject submission to the beast, and bearing the mark of submission visible to all. How exact the

the agreement between the history CHAP. and the prophecy in every part of this description. Can we then entertain adoubt of our having discovered the true fymbolical meaning of this beaft, as well as of the former. Let it be observed, however, that tho' this beaft was posterior to the former in the order of these visions, yet he was in fact before him. The fpirit of prophecy first fets forth the feven headed beaft in all the height of his greatness, and then, under the emblem of another beaft, fucceeding him indeed in vision, but to appear before him, and to continue with him during the whole of his reign, he points out the progress of his advancement, and the means by which it was completed. It is the want of attention to this circumstance, and to the fense in which the term image is here to be understood, that has plunged expositors into endless





endless embarrassment, and driven them into such a perplexing variety of interpretations.

Let us now reflect a moment upon this interesting, but melancholy fcene. How stupendous that wifdom, which, by fo apt and natural a figure, could delineate, fo many ages before, the steps by which antichrist ascended to his super-imperial throne! How monstrous that fuperstition, which could minister to the height of his vast and unparalleled tyranny, and enable him, almost without arms, without territory, without forces, to extend his dominion over the kingdoms of the earth, and hold equally the princes and the people in entire fubjection! And how dreadful that depravation, which could call in the aid of religion itself to the commission of the most horrid impieties, and the most enormous crimes! Can this then

be any other than the character of him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and figns, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be faved. What an awful example have we here prefented to our view of the danger, as well as the wickedness, of grafting Chriflianity upon the policy of this world, in opposition to our Lord's express declaration, that his kingdom is not of this world. Such an incongruous coalition can produce nothing but corruption, and we fee it is impossible to fay to what extent that corruption may go (2).

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(a) It is not an easy matter, to arrange distinctly, the various opinions of interpreters, respecting the meaning of this vision. I speak not of the wild extravagance of those who have sought for the two horned beast among heathenish priests and magicians,

magicians, or among the delutions of Mahomet. I take notice only of the opinions of those who have formed a more probable judgement. The general run of expositors have understood this beaft to be nothing more than another defcription of antichrist under a different form. Napier fo understands it; and interprets the two horns of his spiritual and temporal power. This feems likewise to have been the opinion of Jurieu, Forbes, and Durham, who likewife interpret this beaft in general of antichrift, only they feem to understand his two horns as denoting his hypocrify, that, under the humility and fimplicity of the lamb, he should exert the subtilty and power of the dragon. Mede, Waple, and Newton, understand this beast to denote the Roman hierarchy, though they differ confiderably in the fense which they ascribe to his horns. The first, interprets them of his twofold power of binding and loofing: the fecond, of the two co-ordinate hierarchies of the eastern and western empire: the third, of the two bodies of regulars and feculars in the Romish church. Lowman makes this beaft to fignify the temporal jurifdictions and royalties, which were annexed to many bishoprics in Germany, and which have long had fo much weight in the affairs of the empire This coalition of powers, he feems to think, likewife, is the image of the beaft which is afterwards defcrib-

ed, as it refembles the powers of the papacy, or first beast, and has been constantly employed to promote his interest. With respect to the image of the beaft in this prophecy, Napier understands it of the new empire under Charlemagne, which, he thinks, was an image of the former one under the Roman emperors. Mede interprets it of the ten horned beast, or the papal empire, understanding by the first beast, of which it was an image, the Pagan Roman empire; and he is followed by Durham, Jurieu, and Waple. expositors, however, seem not to have considered, that the beast is still the same beast when he appeared under the feventh, as he was under the fixth head, and therefore, this interpretation is chargeable with the evident impropriety of making a thing the image of itself. Bishop Newton again, following Cocceius, makes this image to fignify the pope himfelf; which, as Markius justly observes, destroys the propriety of the figure altogether; unless we could suppose that a prince could be the image of a kingdom, or the head the image of the body: though his own fancy, that it fignifies the pope's legates, is little more fatisfying. Notwithstanding the length of this note, I cannot withhold from the curious reader the opinion of the learned Vitringa. By the two horned beaft, he understands the Franciscan and Dominisan Friars, especially the latter; by its horns,

their preaching and their miracles; and by the image of the beaft, the tribunal of the inquifition, which he calls a most wicked and detestable institution; in which there is the liveliest reprefentation of the supreme authority which the Romish church usurps over the consciences of men, and of the tyranny which she exercises over the people.

DISSERT-

DISSERTATION III.

ON THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST:

Ver. 18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

Perhaps none of the apocalyptic mysteries are more hard to resolve than this one upon which we are now to enter. Of this, its having employed the attention of learned and ingenious men for so many centuries,

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centuries to fo little effect, is a difcouraging proof. We ought not, however, to give up the matter in despair: on the contrary, we ought, by all means, to endeavour to form an opinion respecting it. Every mistaken attempt to penetrate into its meaning will be like the shutting up of a false entry, till, at last, none but the true one will be left.

It may be proper, first of all, to take notice of the methods which have been chiefly employed, to give a satisfying illustration of this curious point.

A numerous class of commentators go upon the principle of finding out the name of the beast, in a word, the letters of which shall form the number here laid down: and the words Lateinos, Romiith, Ludovicus, and many others have been produced as such. This mode of interpretation is as early as the

the time of Irenæus, the disciple of Differt. Polycarp, the disciple of John, by whom it feems first to have been fuggested, and it has been followed in modern times by Napier, Daubuz, Bp. Newton, and many others.

I believe, however, it has fcarcely given fatisfaction to any intelligent inquirer. The great variety of words in which this number may be found, renders it loofe, and inconfequential. It will apply equally, and the application of it has indeed been made, to Pagans and Mahometans, as well as to antichrift. But the feverest confutation of it is that the Papists have shewn, in some inflances, that it may be applied even to protestants themselves.

Others have gone cabaliftically to work upon this dark and difficult question, by interpreting the meaning of the name, or word, upon which they fix, fuch as Ado-

nikam, which fignifies a Lord rifing up, and whose family consisted of 666, Ezra ii. 13. and Sethur, Numb. xiii. 13. the letters of this number is found, and which fignifies bidden or mystery. This mode of interpretation was introduced by Mr. Broughton, the great English Rabbi, in Queen Elizabeth's time, and it has been adopted by Lightfoot, Vitrin. ga, and others. It feems however as little fatisfactory as the former. The circumstances of coincidence, in all the examples that have yet been propoted, are too flight and trivial to have been pointed at by the spirit of prophecy, in this important and instructive enigma.

This has led fome curious inquirers to assume a principle different from either of the former, and to consider this number as characteristic of the false church in the same manner as the number 144,000 (chap-

(chap. xiv. i.) is characteristic of the true. In this class we may rank the names of Forbes, Mede, Durham, and Potter, which last has been followed by many others. This ingenious man fell upon the device of reducing the numbers to their respective roots. The square root of 144 is 12, which denotes the true apostolic church, and conveys the idea of perfect symmetry and perfect firmness. The nearest square root of 666 is 25, which fignifies that antichrift should be a body politic which should as much affect the number 25 as its distinguishing number, as God feems to have employed the number 12, in establishing his church. This the learned author specifies in a great variety of inflances. He tells us they made 25 gates to the city Rome; they divided the city at first into 25 parishes, over which they 1et

fet 25 cardinals, in 25 churches; and at last their creed was comprifed in 25 articles; besides several other things of less importance. This is perhaps specious, but I am afraid it will not fland the test of a firict examination. It is to little purpose to tell us what has taken place in the cityRome, for no perfon supposes that this is the extent of the papal hierarchy or dominion; and yetmatters have been greatly altered in this respect, even in that city It is no extraordinary thing, furely, to find almost any particular number repeatedly occurring amongst an endless variety of objects, and through a long period of Almost all the inflances which have been mentioned have changed in number during the courfe of that period; and fome of them, particularly the addition of the 25th gate, took place before the

the man of fin was properly reveal- Differt. ed. But after all, how does this resolve the hard and difficult question? If 25 is the diffinguishing and favourite number, the square of it is only 625, and by no rules of arithmetic, without a most arbitrary addition, is it possible to bring out of it that distinguishing number, by which this apocalyptic beaft is characterized.

Laftly, there are fome who reject all these methods of calculation, for the fimple and plaufible opinion, that the number 666 respects the time of antichrist's rife. This they calculate in various ways, according to their feveral hypothefes. This was the opinion of Bullinger, and Nathaniel Stevens, and it has been followed by Lowman and other commentators. I shall only observe respecting it; that the question is evidently proposed as a trial of wisdom

dom; Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, but if it contained nothing more than this plain and easy import, it would certainly require no great share either of wisdom, or understanding to find it out.

It may perhaps be thought prefumptuous to attempt to folve this difficult problem, when the endeavours of the learned, the judicious, the penetrating, and the ingenious, feem entirely to have failed. But is it not proposed to our attentive and ferious enquiry? Is not the fcripture fludent exhorted to fearch out its meaning? Let us not therefore shrink from the duty to which we are called, because the labours of others have not been crowned with fuccess. In order, if possible, to discover its hidden import, I would observe, that, whatever our mode of calculation may be, it must evolve

evolve the distinctive characters of Differt. antichrift, of which it is certainly the fymbol. And what are his diftinctive, and most prominent characters? Has he not been distinguished, through the whole of his reign, by the most enormous superstition, and the most insolent and unrelenting tyranny? Add to this, a blasphemy which is tremendous, and you complete the description. Whatever therefore exhibits these in a conspicuous light, gives us a view of antichrist in his grand and distinguishing features. I observe farther upon this mysterious point, that nothing is more infifted upon, in this book of prophecy, as characterifical of the antichriftian state, than that of ancient Babylon. If therefore we find any thing there, that comes up to the import of this passage, it is an additional evidence Mmm

that

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that we have hit upon its real meaning.

Now, in furveying the history of that ancient state, the image on the plains of Dura, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, feizes our attention as probably much to our purpose. It was 60 cubits high, and 6 cubits broad. It was made of gold. All nations were commanded to fall down and worship it. And, if any person refused, he was to be cast into the midst of a burning furnace. Here was a fuperflition, great and magnificent: It was enforced likewife by a tyranny, fevere and unfeeling; and it was attended with a blaiphemy most audacious and shocking: For who is that God, faid Nebuchadnezzar, that shall deliver you out of my hands? What a striking emblem is this of the leading characters of the papal beaft. Let us blend, or incorporate it with his

his monstrous figure, as it is describ- Differt. ed at the beginning of this chapter, and we shall see the number come out exactly as the apostle has flated it. Nothing can be more natural and fimple than this operation. In multiplying the height of this image by the ten horns of the beaft, we have the number 600: and in multiplying the breadth of the image, by the ten horns, and by the last head of the beast, the only one which denotes antichrift, that is to fay in multiplying the breadth by 11, we have the number 66; the two together amounting to 666, the very number that is here put down. By this eafy operation, we fee the fpirit of ancient Babylon transfufed, with increased energy, into her monstrous antitype. By the first multiplication, we perceive that the fuperstition of mystical Babylon should be of a far more gigantic fize

than that of ancient Babylon, even as ten is greater than one; and by the fecond multiplication, we learn that this enormous fuperstition, together with the tyranny with which it was continued, and by which it was supported, was to extend, in one great body, over all the kingdoms which belonged to the beaft: and was to be entirely under the management of antichrift as the governing head, which carried blafphemy upon it, as its very name. Here then we have a folution of this very difficult question, which, while it gives us the exact number of the beaft which the apostle puts down, exhibits a most striking picture of antichrist in all his distinguishing features. It shews that the spirit of God does not deal in cabaliftical conceits about names, and words, and letters, and the fecret powers of numbers, according to the interpretaterpretations which have been commonly given; but that, while we have the number entire by which the beaft is denoted, we have it connected with a fet of characters, which are not only applicable to him in the clearest manner, but which distinguish him from every other power which has appeared in the world.

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There are feveral other circumflances by which this interpretation may be corroborated. First of all, I fubmit it to the judgement of the curious inquirer, whether there is not a note of discovery to be observed in the intimation concerning the number of the beaft, when we are told that it is the number of a man. Nebuchadnezzar's image is allowed to have been of human form, and when its number is blended with that of this monstrous animal, it gives us again the number of antichrift

chrift, which is the number of a man. Nebuchadnezzar's image likewife was worshipped with all manner of musical instruments; this happily reprefents the well known pomp and pageantry of antichrist in his idolatrous worship. The image, we are farther told, was made of gold, and, as has been thought, even the gold of the temple of Jerusalem was employed to make it; and does not this most strikingly fet forth, how antichrist has perverted the pure and facred materials of heavenly truth, to erect a fystem of corruption, the most tremendous that ever the world beheld. Those who refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image, were three children of the captivity: likewise those who first opposed antichrist were three, whom he thought he had held in captivity under him. First the Waldenses and

Albigenses,

Albigenfes, who are fcarcely to be distinguished from one another: and foon after the Bohemian brethren and Wickliff, with his followers in England: Finally the three children were to be burnt with fire, and it is not a little remarkable that burning with fire feems to have been a favourite method of destroying heretics under the papal persecution. Let me only further observe, that, if we suppose that this image was intended by the fpirit of prophecy to lead us to the folution of this curious and inftructive enigma, we see an important reason for Daniel's being so minute and particular as to give us the exact number of its dimensions, for which upon any other principle no reason can be affigned. Nor can the great disproportion of it parts be accounted for, but by its being intended to indicate, that the syf-

tem of fuperstition and tyranny, of which it was the model, and which was afterwards to rife to such an extravagant pitch should at length be crushed down by its own enormous weight.

VISION

VISION OF THE LAMB AND HIS REDEEMED WITH HIM.

CHAP. XIV. 1-5.

Ver. 1. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb flood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

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Here we are presented with a view of the true church of Christ emerging from that state of obscurity in which she had been hid for ages. The apostle beheld her as a feparate society, stationed on Nnn mount

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mount Sion, the ancient emblem of her flability and elevation, with the Lamb, as her Prince and Saviour, at her head. This fociety had his Father's name written in their foreheads. fignifying, that they were the chosen people of God, and confecrated to his honour: the number an hundred forty and four thousand of which they were composed, is perhaps intended to intimate, that they are the fame felect apostolical fociety who were fet apart and fealed with the feal of God at the beginning of the apostacy, and, O astonishing effect of the power and grace of JEHOVAH, are now produced entire and unfpotted, notwithstanding all the abominations which had fo univerfally prevailed. When they thus appeared, heaven itself feems to have been moved at the fight; for the apostle adds,

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Ver 2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

Ver. 3. And they fung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

The heavenly church, upon this occasion, tuned their voices and their harps together. The symphony was beyond description grand and solemn. It struck the ear of our astonished prophet like the distant mingled sound of many waters rushing, or like the rolling noise of a mighty thunder. These, however, were so delightfully modulated, that they seemed at the same time,

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time, as if they had been played upon any of the fweetest musical instruments. In this admirable way, a new fong, as if it had been made for the occasion, was fung by the celestial choir, in the presence of Jehovah, expressive of the praises of that grace, by which this favourite fociety had been fo wonderfully preferved; a fong therefore accommodated to their experience and feelings, and which none other upon earth could either adopt, or understand. The following distinction of their character completes the description.

Vcr. 4. These are they which were not desiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the surfifults unto God, and to the Lamb.

Ver. 5. And in their mouth was found

no guile; for they are without fault before CHAP. the throne of God.

These persons were distinguished from the whole of the corrupt mass that surrounded them, by a variety of prominent and characteristical features. As chaste virgins to Christ, they kept themselves pure from all pollutions of idols, reprefented in prophecy by the defilements of fornication. Their whole principles and conduct were regulated entirely by the doctrine and laws of Christ: to him they adhered, with the most inviolable attachment, in every fituation, and thus they followed the Lamb whitherfoever he went. By feparating themselves entirely from all connection with antichrift, they were manifested as the first-fruits of the redeemed from his horrible bondage, which were afterwards to be followed with a plentiful CHAP.

tiful harvest. Finally, they were found sincere and without offence before the throne of God, however much they were traduced and condemned at the tribunals of the wicked.

This vision points so evidently at the Waldenses and Albigenses, that I cannot hesitate in thus applying it.

Every circumstance which it defcribes agrees exactly with their character and history. It was chiefly in their fequestered vallies, that the church obtained an afylum, for fo long a period, from the malice of her enemies: the whole world, they only excepted, having gone wandering after the beaft. But, what is precifely to our purpose, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, their numbers had greatly encreased, and they had spread their influence to a confiderable extent. Then too, they appeared as a diftinch

tinct and separate society, maintain- CHAP. ing the purity and fimplicity of Christian faith and practice, which were every where elfe corrupted and debased; and thus, that part of the vision, the Lamb's standing on mount Sion, with an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name on their forebeads, was fully verified. They likewife abhorred and exegrated the abominations of the Romish church; acknowledging only the authority of Christ in matters of religion, as appears by their confessions of faith, which are still extant; and giving themselves up entirely to his unerring direction. wherever he should lead them, even if he should bring them to suffering and to death, as their after perfecutions affectingly testify. How exact the description then of their character in the stile of this prophecy! These are they who were not defiled with

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women; and who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. One other circumflance remains to be taken notice of, which is, their holy and exemplary lives, the truth and certainty of which, their enemies themselves have unwillingly attested. One of of them for instance, declares "That it has contributed fomewhat to the establishment of these Waldenses, that, except what they have done against the Romish faith and religion, in other things they lead almost a purer life than the rest of Christians," And another introduces his description of their character by observing, "That heretics are known by their manners and by their words, for they are regular in their manners and modest in their deportment:" upon which the venerable Usher, by whom these testimonies are collected, makes the following just and pertinent remark,

mark, 'most wretched times indeed CHAP. when regularity of manners and modefly of deportment are the diftinguishing badges of heretics!' But what completes the argument, these were the first people who asferted their independence of the Pope and of the Romish Councils, and obtained deliverance from that bondage; and therefore they are called, in this prophecy, the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb. The harvest which has followed already, has not been inconsiderable: their doctrine fpread abroad; the flames of perfecution were unable to deftroy it: it made its progress into Germany, into Bohemia, and into Britain itself, and prepared the way for

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through fo many lands.

the reformation, about three centuries after, by which the rights of conscience have been afferted, and the knowledge of the truth diffused

How

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How diffinguishing the honour of these faithful followers of Christ in times of the greatest difficulty and danger! They were indeed hated and perfecuted by a wicked world around them: but they were celebrated in heavenly fong as beloved of God, and have been long fince exalted to the highest happiness in the joyful regions above, while their enemies have been fuffering in the abodes of mifery and despair. Even in this world, their praifes have gone abroad into all the churches, and their memory will be held in high estimation by the faints in every fucceeding period unto the end of time. How encouraging, and edifying, the testimony they have here received! Let us, who have much lefs temptation to shake us, imitate their fidelity and

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and firmness, and aspire to their elevated and heavenly temper (2).

CHAP.

(2) Forbes understands this prophecy, of the church in her obscure and lurking state under antichrist: But how then could she be represented as appearing openly with the Lamb upon mount Sion? Parxus, Jurieu, and Bp. Newton, understand it of the church during the whole period from the rise of antichrist to the time of the rcformation: but this interpretation is evidently liable in part to the same objection. Durham applies it to the Bohemians, as well as the Waldenfes; not confidering, that those were part of the increase after the first fruits had been gathered. Mede makes no particular application of it, but only considers it as a representation of the church, as faithful to the Lamb, in the midst of that world of nominal Christians, who all followed the beast. Lowman confiders it, as giving a view of the church, arrived at a state of perfect religion and happiness, in the heavenly world. The learned Vitringa fo far takes it up in its just prophetical import, in applying it to the Waldenses, particularly at the time when they broke off from the Romish church, and appeared openly against her. But he strangely interprets the harpers and the fingers fingers of Wickliff and his followers in England, and John Huss, Jerom of Prague, and their followers in Germany; and after them the Taborites, and then the Bohemian brethren. He understands their fong to be their confession of faith, which none at that time could understand, or approve of but the Waldenses alone. supports by the following curious passage of their history preferved by Camerarius and Perrin-"The Bohemian brethren, the true remains of the Huslites, having separated entirely from the communion of the Romish church, when they understood that there was a small body of the ancient Waldenses in Austria, sent two pastors, and as many elders to them, to inquire into their doctrine, their discipline, and manner of life, who were joyfully received by the Waldenses, and after explaining their faith and practice, they were made known to one another to their mutual confolation. But the Waldenfes, having learned from the Pohemian brethren that there were fome things in which they were ftill deficient, for instance, that they did not sufficiently avoid the communion of Popery, that they professed Christ too timidly, and were too careful of worldly things, they received the admonition with thankfulnets, and prefited by it." This fays the ingenious expositor) was to learn the fong of the Bohemians.

mians. But the interpretation is too forced to fatisfy the plain and fimple inquirer. I only further observe upon this vision, that it is difficult to conceive, with Mede, that the name in their foreheads denoted baptism, when the papists had this badge as well as they; and so far from renouncing it when they received the mark of the beast, they placed a greater dependence on it than had been done before.

VISION

VISION OF THE ANGEL WITH THE EVERLAST-ING GOSPEL, &c.

CHAP.

Ver. 6. And I faw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Ver. 7. Saying, with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgement is come; and worfhip him that made heaven, and earth, and the fea, and the fountains of waters.

The angel whom the apostle beheld flying in the midst of heaven, is here called another angel, which seems to have puzzled even the most

most judicious expositors. But is it CHAP. not probable, that fome angel interpreter had been with him in the preceding vision, as upon feveral other occasions, to inform him of the character of that holy fociety which he fo exactly defcribes. Let this probable supposition be admitted, and it folves the difficulty at once. This angel feemed fwift to execute his commission, in carrying abroad to the nations of the world, the everlasting gospel; meaning, the ancient and primitive gofpel, which had been wonderfully preferved and handed down, even by its enemies. What a lively intimation, that the period was now arrived which should not terminate till it fpread its influence over every land. The angel likewife loudly called upon men to fear God, and give him glery, because of the judgements he was to execute upon the enemies

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of his people, for the appointed feafon of these judgements was approaching; therefore they should learn both the impiety and the fottishness of giving homage to any creature, either in heaven, or on earth, and pay their adorations to the Almighty Creator alone. Does not every reader perceive that this is another lively prophetic intimation of the bleffed effects which should be produced by the discoveries of heavenly truth, with which the period here referred to should be illuminated, and by the tremendous judgements that should then be poured out upon the wicked. But the fcene is further opened by the voice of the fecond angel which is next described.

^{8.} And there followed another angel, faying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city,

city, because she made all nations drink of CHAP. the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

If we may judge from the event, this angel probably followed the former at a considerable distance; for he feems to proclaim the fall of mystical Babylon, that city of extensive sway, as at hand. Her fall is not to be understood as coming in the way of natural decline, but in the way of judgement, and awful destruction, as appears from the reason which is subjoined, because fhe had deeply corrupted the nations, by every feducing art, and drawn them into all her abominable idolatries, here described, by making them to drink of the inflaming wine of her fornication. But another angel still is introduced, before this final judgement upon Babylon is actually inflicted, thus denouncing Ppp vengeance

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vengeance upon all her friends and fupporters.

Ver. 9. And the third angel followed them, faying, with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

Ver. 10. The fame shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

Ver. 11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosever receiveth the mark of his name.

Nothing can be more awful than this denunciation. The language is too expressive both of the severest temporal judgements, and of everlasting

lasting punishment, to require to be explained. It only remains that it be deeply pondered by those who either by espousing the superstition of antichrift, or even contributing to maintain his cause, may bein danger of incurring this terrible doom. And let it be observed, that it is reprefented as one of the most aggravating circumstances in their misery, that it is without the fmallest commiferation to alleviate its horrors; even the compaffionate Lamb himfelf, in the midst of approving angels, beholding their torments unmoved (a).

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This likewife, it appears, shall be a time of severe trial and suffering to the people of God. Therefore it is added,

Ver.



Ver. 12. Here is the patience of the faints: Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

They shall then be made manifest, by the constancy of their obedience, and the sirmness of their saith, and the calmness of their submission under all their sufferings; for through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God: therefore the happy deliverance of the saints from this world of forrow, was impressed upon the mind of the apostle in the solemn and affecting manner, which he goes on to relate,

Ver. 13. And I heard a voice from heaven, faying unto me, Write: Bleffed are the dead, which die in the Lord from hence-forth; yea, faith the Spirit, that they may rest

rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

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This voice was uttered for the confolation of fuffering Christians, that their faith might not fail: not that the faints who died before that period were not happy as well as they; this is not the meaning of the expression from henceforth in this verse: it only means, from the time of their death, and denotes, that immediately after they had finished their labours and fufferings upon the earth, they should enter into a most blesfed rest in heaven, where their toils and forrows should be crowned with everlasting joy. This was intended for the encouragement of the faints, particularly at that period; and the folemn manner in which the affurance is given, by the Spirit of truth himself, is strongly fitted

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fitted to animate and comfort their fouls (2).

This vision of the three angels in

(3) I cannot but think that the mode of interpretation, which the learned Vitringa applauds, in joining απαφτι to 'αναπαυσονται, in this passage, is very constrained. Nor do I see any need for such a transposition of this particle, which has so much disturbed expositors: The fense is easy and natural without it: Bleffed are the dead which die in the Lord, 'anager from henceforth, or rather, from now, if our language would admit of fuch an expreflion; evidently referring to the moment of their death which had just now been spoken of. As little can I suppose, that the dead who die in the Lord are to be understood only of martyrs. Not only the expression does not require to be so restricted, (see 1 Cor xv. 18) but if it were, the confolation would be with-held from many for whom it was certainly intended, even from all those holy men who shall then be found struggling against corruption, and maintaining their integrity in the midft of danger, without being ever brought to the trial of fealing their testimony with their blood.

in fuccession one to another, embraces the whole of that period which commenced with the republication of the gospel to the nations of the world, after it had been fo long thut up by antichrift, and which terminates with his deftruction. The first angel represents the reformation, begun by Luther, and carried on by many zealous and able divines, by which fo many kingdoms broke off from the dominion of antichrift, and liberty of preaching the gospel has been afforded in fo many lands. The appearance of the fecond angel cannot be earlier than the beginning of those political convulsions, by which the fall of fpiritual Babylon shall be accomplished. One of these, I conceive, has already taken place, and the effect of it has been fo great, that it has not only shaken the papal dominions, but has filled almost

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all Europe with consternation. The principles to which it has given birth, are the most unfriendly to antichrist's power of any that have ever been laid down; particularly that one of withholding from religion all civil fupport, without which his kingdom cannot exist, If these principles then should spread their influence, (and they appear to be very infectious,) it is easy to see that the fall of myslical Babylon must be at no great distance. The third angel will probably appear foon after the fecond; for then, the judgements upon antichrift will hasten on apace. But his voice will be chiefly heard from the time of the drying up of the great river Euphrates till the battle of Armagiddon. During that period, every poslible artisice will be employed in support of the last interests of tyranny and superflition; and the enmity and cruelty

of antichrist against the people of God will again break forth. This will be a trying time to Christians. Every feductive allurement, and every terrifying menace, shall be made use of, to gain their compliance with the iniquitous fystem, which at the fame time shall be coloured over with every fophistical recommendation. It was therefore necessary that an antidote should be provided against fo great a danger. This is done by the voice of the third angel, who, in the clear accomplishment of prophecy, and in the awful appearances of providence against these enemies of God, will, folemnly, and loudly, proclaim the guilt and danger of all who stand in connection with them (a).

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(a) Mede thinks the preaching of the first angel was fulfilled about the year 720, in the Greek and Oriental churches; the evangelizing angel then flying in the top of heaven, that is, in a high

and lofty place, as he did not employ mean and vulgar men for his instruments, but the high powers in the Christian world, the emperors at Constantinople, Leo Isaurus, Constantinus Iconomachus, Leo Armenius, Michael Balbus, and Theophilus; all of whom, but especially the first two, by their decrees and edicts, strenuously opposed image and faint worship. He thinks the preaching of this angel was heard, not only in the eaft, but likewise in the west, in the year 700, in the fynod of Frankfort under Charlemagne; in which the worship of images, and the fecond Nicene Council, which established it, were condemned. The fecond angel he takes to be the Waldenses and Albigenses. The preaching of the third angel, the most illustrious of all, he understands to be fulfilled in the work of Luther and his fucceffors.-Bifhop Newton follows him exactly in all the parts of this interpretation But thefe expositors have, certainly, gone much too far back in fearch of thefe angels. How could the first angel, for instance, be faid to preach the gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, at the period they affign to him, when, for ages after, it continued to be corrupted, till its character was entirely defaced? Not to speak of the strange incongruous notion, of emperors

emperors preaching the gospel by decrees and edicts. And how could it be then faid that the hour of God's judgement was come, meaning evidently his judgement against Babylon, which was to terminate in her fall, when she had not nearly attained the height of her domination?-Durham understands the preaching and proclamations of the three angels, to be nothing more than the different steps, or stages, of the work of the reformation. First, Luther, preaching only against indulgences, purgatory, and such like grofs and fcandalous errors: afterwards, as he grows in light, affuming the province of the fecond angel, declaring Rome to be Babylon, and the Pope antichrift, and foretelling the ruin of both: and laftly, the reformers, in the character of the third angel, requiring Christians to separate entirely from the communion of the Romish church. But did the reformers confign to eternal mifery all who continued in the communion of that church, or were they warranted fo to do? Yet this is properly the business of the third angel, and must belong to a time when God's judgements against her are made manifest. -Somewhat analogous to this last interpretation is that of the learned Vitringa. He understands the first angel, to denote Luther and his fellowlabourers in the reformation, who flood at the head of that great work. The fecond angel, he refers

he refers to, what he calls, the fecond age of the reformation; and feems to point at Calvin, the most distinguished character of that period, as the person in whom he was realized. The third angel, he referves for the third age of the reformation, embracing a period of great trial and perfecution to the church. This, he thinks, began to be fulfilled in his time, in the perfecution of the Gallic reformed church, and in the preaching of faithful witnesses, whom God raised up to declare his judgments against those who should apostatize from the faith even in these trying circumstances. But he thinks it will be still more fully accomplished, in the preaching of zealous and holy ministers, during the great and more general affliction which shall precede the founding of the last trumpet.

For the reasons I have assigned, and others that might be mentioned, I conceive that we are now under the voice of the second angel. We are not yet suffering persecution, but we are suffering great decline, which shall grow deeper and deeper till the general conversion. Previous to that time, the church shall be a little one and a mean one; nay, she shall be even for faken and bated, so that no man shall go through her, (Ifa. lx. 15, 22) and her strength and spirit shall be so wasted that she shall seem as dead (Rom. xi. 15.) Let us not be surprized then, though insidelity should

should increase. Indeed I look for its increase; and likewise for the increase of human schemes of religion, under the name of Christianity, in which its holy and heavenly doctrine is not to be found, till God write folly upon all these efforts of human wisdom, by the universal impiety and corruption which they shall produce: after which he will manifest the power of his own grace and truth, in quickening a world dead in trespasses and fins. In the mean time, hatred and contempt shall be the lot of the faithful upon the earth, and both the arts of feduction, and the arm of violence, will be employed against them. Let us therefore liften with folemn attention to our Lord's declaration, which relates as I conceive to the same period; "Behold, I come as a thief. Bleffed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments." Rev. xvi. 15.

VISION

VISION OF THE SON OF MAN WITH THE SICKLE IN HIS HAND.

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Ver. 14. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one fat, like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

Here begins the description of a very awful vision, representing the judgements of God upon the wicked, to their total destruction. The apostle was again wrapt in prophetic extacy: his eyes were opened upon a new and wonderful scene: He beheld a splendid cloud, the emblem

of majesty, descend from heaven, till it came down to the earth a). In the person who fat upon it, he recognized the appearance of his divine Master himself. Upon his head was a crown of gold, the enfign of fovereign empire, and in his hand was a sharp sickle, the emblem of swift destruction to his enemies. While he mused upon this august and solemn appearance, the fcene inflantly filled up, and haftened to a conclusion. See it reflected, with admirable fimplicity, from his devout and feeling mind, in the following part of the description.

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Ver. 15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that fat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle,

⁽a) The cloud, it is evident, must have appeared descending till it hovered upon the ground, for the person who sat on it, was able to thrust in his sickle into the harvest.

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fickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Ver. 16. And he that fat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

In order to fet forth the justice of the punishment which was now to be executed, and to heighten its folemnity and awe, an angel, called another in reference to those of the former vision, is introduced coming out of the temple, expressing his high approbation of it; and intimating, that finners, by the dreadful progrefs of their wickedness, were become ripe for vengeance. This instructive apparatus over, the instrument of misery is stretched forth, and they are cut down and deftroyed by it.

Instantly another representation was exhibited, still more tremend-

ous than the former, of which we have the following vivid and impressive description.

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Ver. 17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

Ver. 18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.

Ver. 19. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

Lest it should be thought that Christ himself was to appear in person, to take vengeance upon his enemies, the scene is again renewed under the emblem of a vintage;

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and

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and an angel of destruction comes forth from the temple in heaven, not the church, furely, for prophecy does no warrant the fupposition that the church shall execute this judgement, but, as it were, from the immediate presence of God, and furnished likewise with a sharp sickle, to intimate his being the commissioned executioner of the divine vengeance. He feems, however, not to have been authorifed to firike the fatal blow, till another angel arrived, giving him instructions to that effect. This was the angel of juftice, fymbolically characterifed by his coming forth from the altar of facrifice, and his having power over fire, the emblem of incenfed vengeance. In consequence of those instructions, he appears, not only to have gathered the clusters of the vine of the earth, but to have cut down the vine itself, and to have cast all into

into the wine-press of the wrath of God. Hence we learn, that the arm of power cannot destroy even the wicked themselves, till the justice of heaven is pleased to commission it. But when a people are become ripe for judgement, and the sentence is gone forth against them, dreadful are the calamities which may then be expected. Nothing can be more tremendous than the concluding scene of this vision; when the apostle beheld,

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Ver. 20. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

The wine-press here, can be no other than what is called in a subsequent vision, the wine-press of the sierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and he who

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who trod it, as we are there informed, is that glorious person, who hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lord. It was trodden without the city, probably meaning the city Rome itself; and blood came out of the wine-press to a wide extent; and even unto the horses bridles, a proverbial expression denoting great and terrible slaughter.

The two diffinct representations of which this vision consists, in their great intent and meaning, like Pharaoh's dream, are one. Their object is to delineate the destruction of mystical Babylon, which the third proclaiming angel, immediately preceding, had pronounced to be fallen. They are therefore of the same import with the battle of the great day of God Almighty, which is afterwards described, when the beast and the false prophet were taken, and cast into

the burning lake, and the remnant were flain with the fword of him that fat on the . borfe, and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (xix. 20.) The vision has been supposed further to intimate. that the fall of Babylon shall be accomplished by two separate and signal strokes of judgement, with a confiderable space of time intervening, fimilar to the fpace which intervenes between the harvest and vintage. For this, however, there does not feem to be any fatisfying reason. In the prophecy of Joel, to which this description alludes, and which probably relates to the fame event, no fuch interval is to be found. On the contrary, the vintage feems to be hastened, in fuch a manner, as rather to be before, than after, the harvest: for by the time that the harvest was ripe for the fickle, the prefs is faid to be full and the fats to overflow, Joel iii. 13. Besides.

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Besides, in the more particular account of the fall of Babylon, under the vials, there is nothing that corresponds to this supposition; for, instead of two, we find no less than feven, fignal strokes of judgement coming upon her, by which she was gradually brought down, till fhe was finally ruined. The truth is, that, in this vision, the harvest and vintage are reprefented together, in order to give an adequate view of the complete defolation and awful mifery with which her fall shall be attended. The appearance of Christ first, and then of an angel, to execute the tremendous punishment, denotes, that the dispositions of providence shall be so extraordinary, as to manifest the power and presence of him, who shall break his enemies to pieces like a potter's vessel, even while he carries on his defigns by the instruments of his vengeance upon

upon the earth. This shall be most of all remarkable at the conclusion of the scene, when the wine-press was trodden without the city, which is represented as his particular province *, fo that blood shall come out of it even to the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. The last judgement on antichrist is reprefented, upon all occasions, by every thing that can strike the mind with confernation What more strongly describe either the facility with which he and his fupporters shall be destroyed, or the infupportable fufferings which they shall endure, than grapes crushed by the feet of him that treadeth the wine-prefs. But when we fee blood iffuing from it, and flowing deeply, to a vast extent, the vail is

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thrown

^{*} See Ifa. lxiii. Rev. xix.

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thrown aside, and we become almost witnesses of the dreadful slaughter. Two circumstances are here recorded, which deserve particular attention. The first respects the place of this final desolation, the other the compass to which it will reach. * * * *

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* Here there is unfortunately a chasm in the Manuscript, which deprives us of the ingenious author's conjectures upon this curious and interesting subject.

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Ver. 1. And I faw another fign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues: for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

Ver. 2. And I faw as it were a fea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

Vet. 3. And they sing the song of Mofes, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Ver. 4. Who shall not fear thee, O Sff Lord, CHAP.

Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgements are made manifest.

Ver. 5. And after that I booked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

Ver. 6. And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

Ver. 7. And one of the four beafts gave unto the feven angels feven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

Ver. 8. And the temple was filled with finoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple till the feven plagues of the feven angels were fulfilled.

This vision exhibits a very magnificent feene which the apostle beheld, fitted to strike the mind with folemn

folemn attention and awe, in the CHAP. prospect of the pouring out of the feven vials upon the enemies of the church of God, which were to terminate in their total overthrow. The apostle was again taken up into heaven, where he faw another fign besides those which he had formerly described, a sign too of great and portentous import. He faw feven angels, having the feven last plagues, in which were filled up the wrath of God. He faw likewise, as it were, a fea of glass mingled with fire; and what was particularly interesting, he faw them that had gotten the victory over the beaft, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand upon the sea of glass, having the harps of God. The fong which they fung he feems distinctly to have heard, and a noble act it was of adoration, doxology, and praise. It is not an easy matter to illustrate the mystical import

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port of these sublime and magnisicent emblems. Beautiful is the interpretation of the learned and ingenious Mede: he confiders this fcene as defcriptive of the deliverance which the faithful received at the time of the reformation, who, he thinks, are here reprefented, even while flanding upon the brim of the fea of glass, in which they had been wishing themselves from their former pollutions, exulting in the wonders which God had wrought in their behalf, and finging the fong of victory, and triumph. But, not to fay that the appearance of the fea of glass as mingled with fire, has no meaning upon this interpretation, the whole of this vision has so evident a reference to the deliverance of God's ancient people out of Egypt, that one cannot help being inclined to underfland the sea of glass mingled with fire

fire in allusion to the Red Sea, so fa- CHAP. mous in the history of that extraordinary event. It is furprifing that the learned and good Vitringa should be so much offended with this interpretation, calling it an idle fancy of fome expositors, though he offers no reason against it, but what arises from the unnecessary, and indeed, groundless, supposition, that the Red Sea mysfically denotes the world of the ungodly. when we consider this sea of glass mingled with fire, in allufion to the Red Sea, nothing can be more apt and striking than the sense which it exhibits. It gives us a view of the people of God, in their escape from myflical Egypt, flanding as it were upon the opposite shore of the Red Sea; on one hand, contemplating with wonder and gratitude, their deliverance from spiritual thraldom; on the other, looking forward.

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ward, by faith, to the pouring out of the vials, by which the destruction of their enemies was to be completed. This interpretation is confirmed by other circumstances in the description. What an analogy is there, for instance, between the plagues upon antichrift, and those upon Egypt! The fong which they fing is in the fame spirit with that which the Ifraclites fang upon the shore of the Red Sea, and therefore is properly called the fong of Moses, the servant of God, that is, the fong which he taught the children of Israel to fing upon that occasion; and, when understood in its fpiritual meaning, is properly called the fong of the Lamb, that is, the fong with which he fills the mouths of his people for the far greater deliverance which he has wrought for them, of which the former was only a faint and distant type.

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CHAP. XVI. 1-9.

Ver. 1. And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Ver. 2. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

Ver. 3. And the fecond angel poured out his vial upon the fea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living foul died in the fea.

Ver. 4. And the third angel poured

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out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

Ver. 5. And I heard the angel of the waters fay, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus:

Ver. 6. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

Ver. 7. And I heard another out of the altar fay, Even fo, Lord God Almighty, true and rightcous are thy judgements.

Ver. 8. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the fun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

Ver. 9. And men were fcorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

The Notes on the preceding chapter, and the Commentary and Notes upon this paffage have not been found.

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THE POURING OUT OF THE FIFTH VIAL,

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Ver. 10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the the feat of the beaft; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain.

Ver. 11. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

By the feat of the beaft, upon which this vial was poured out, we are to understand his authority and dominion; a feat, or throne, being the emblem of fixed authority, and of settled empire. The very foundations then, of antichrist's dominion were CHAP. XVI.

to be shaken by the pouring out of this vial. The confequence was, that his kingdom was filled with darknefs, a deep and melancholy gloom pervaded the minds of his fubjects. Their anxiety was fo great, that it is expressed by one of the strongest natural fymptoms, as if they gnawed their very tongues for pain: vet, the fure evidence of approaching ruin, they repented not of their deeds, but, in the midst of their pains and of their fores, they blasphemed the God of heaven, not only by perfifting in the folemn mockery of their superstition, after all the judgements they had fuffered, but by calling in religion itself, to justify the violation of the first principles of nature, in support of that fystem of tyranny, which had fo long been exercifed over both the bodies and minds of men.

The pouring out of this vial feems at this time to be receiving

its accomplishment, in one of the most extraordinary political events, that perhaps the history of the world affords, the fall of an oppressive and arbitrary monarchy in France, and the establishment of a different form of government in its room. CHAP. XVI.

No where did fuch a revolution feem more improbable; for no where did defpotifm feem more firmly established, no where was it formed into a more perfect fystem. A powerful nobility, an interested clergy, and a numerous army, concurred to support the throne. The causes that wrought its overthrow were various. One of the most obvious and most immediate, was, the defire of depressing a rival nation, and, with that view, forming an alliance with her colonies against her. In order to render this interference popular, arguments, justifying the cause of the subject against the sovereign,

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vereign, were industriously circulated throughout the kingdom. Men eagerly read, they thought, and entered warmly into the fubject. With deep interest they contemplated the example of a fet of feeble colonies, scattered upon a distant and wide extended fhore, combating the efforts of one of the most powerful governments on earth. They were taught to rejoice in their fuccefs. But the exertions on the part of France which contributed to that fuccess completed the derangement of her finances, and called for an enormous increase of the national burthens. Recourfe was had to a remedy, plaufible, but dangerous to the monarchy. The States general were called together. They met, full of the spirit which many writers had long been endeavouring to diffuse, which the court itfelf had unintentionally cherished.

They

They completely overturned the antient government; if it may not, with more propriety, be faid to have been overturned by the spirit of a people living three thousand miles distant. Thus, by a fingular combination of circumstances, that Sun of the antichristian world. which we have feen under the former vial, for more than a century, fcorching men with the intenfeness of his heat, and spreading devastation all around him, was extinguished in the billows of the Atlantic ocean.



This is an event fo strongly stamped with the hand of Providence, that a contemplative and ferious mind cannot but regard it as of a very prognosticating import. It is not to our purpose here, to examine the principles of government which the founders of the new republic have laid down. The influence of these principles

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principles has already spread to a confiderable extent, and has occafioned a high degree of anxiety and alarm. The measures which have been adopted with respect to religion, pointed perhaps at the destruction of Christianity itself, have greatly alarmed many ferious minds. But let the Christian difinifs his fears: Christianity requires not to be supported by carnal weapons and the arm of flesh. All she asks is liberty to publish her doctrines, and difpense her ordinances; and this, notwithstanding their enmity against her, their own principles have conftrained the French rulers to afford. Not genuine Chriftianity and pure religion, but the fabric of superstition, must fall, when deprived of the props of wealth and power. Never therefore was there an event more threatening to the dominion

dominion of antichrift than this: no wonder then that his kingdom

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should be full of darkness, that perturbation and horror should overfpread his realms. But have they repented of their wickedness in confequence of the judgements of God thus visibly falling upon them? Are they not as mad in their idolatry fuperstition as before? And do not the supporters of idolatry and fuperflition grossly blaspheme the name of the Most High, when they call it the cause of religion, and the cause of God (2).

(2) The great Napier makes the pouring out of this vial; to be the diminishing of the Roman empire, by the Turkish power, which arose about the year 1051. Jurieu understands it of the removal of the Popes to Avignon, and the grand schisin of the west, and fixes its beginning to the year 1305. Vitringa and Lowman interpret it of the reformation by Luther. But Mede, Durham, Waple, and Markius, understand this vial to be poured poured upon the city of Rome itself and to accomplish its destruction: only with this difference that the last takes in the neighbouring part of Italy along with the city. But these worthy and learned expositors seem here to offend against their own professed principles, by preferring the literal before the symbolical import.

THE

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THE POURING OUT OF THE SIXTH VIAL.

Ver. 12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.



This part of the description informs us, that the judgement of this vial does properly consist in the drying up of the great river Euphrates, whatever the meaning of that emblem may be; and that the design of its drying up is to prepare the way for certain persons, who are here called, the kings of the east; an emulu u

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blem perhaps as obscure as the former. The subsequent part of the description respects the consequences of this judgement, in the preparations of the enemies of the truth for one great and united effort, in defence of those systems of civil oppression and religious delusion, to which they formerly owed all their importance, and now, perhaps, their existence inself. These are brought about by the most assiduous and artful intrigues, as the apostle very plainly intimates in the following verses:

Ver. 13. And I face three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

Ver 14. For they are the spirits of devils, rearking miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world,

sworld, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.



These spirits are the instigators of revenge, and the agents of tyranny and fuperstition; they are fitly represented as coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beaft, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, as they are fent forth to promote their interests, and act under their respective influence. They are compared to frogs, who delight in flagnant and corrupted waters; and therefore fitly denote the advocates of a bafe and corrupted policy. They are further described as of a very wicked and devilish temper; as full of malice and fubtlety; as using every false and delusive art to accomplish their design. But they do not perceive that they are only bringing up the kings of the earth, and their armies, to receive the vengeance of Heaven,

CHAP. XVI. Heaven, in their fignal destruction; in respect of which, the time of their mad and impious conflict is, emphatically, and awfully, stiled that great day of God Almighty. This however will be a time of trial and danger to the people of God, and therefore the Saviour is introduced addressing to them this gracious admonition;

Ver. 15. Behold, I come as a thief: bleffed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, left he walk naked, and they fee his shame.

The coming of Christ here, is to take vengeance upon his enemies, which to them will be fudden and unexpected; and perhaps many of the faints themselves may be insensible of the danger of being connected with them, till his judgements be made manifest, when they will

will endeavour to escape for their lives, like persons sleeing naked from a house which is broke open by thieves. Therefore watchfulness, and maintaining the graces of holiness in a lively exercise, here represented by bodily clothing, are recommended to all.

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Ver. 16. And he gathered them together unto a place called, in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.

This is the place where the fatal battle was to be fought, and hither the kings of the earth were gathered to the final destruction (2).

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(a) Dr. Doddridge, after feveral commentators, fupposes that it was God who gathered them together, and subjoins the following observation. This seems a memorable circumstance: they were the dragon's army, yet God affembled them. Such oblique intimations of the interposition of Providence are wonderfully instructive, and they

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The great river Euphrates, upon which this vial was poured out, denotes, as I conceive, the great Germanic body, or, as it is pompoufly and impioufly stiled, The Holv Roman Empire. This has been the great bulwark of myflical, as that river was of antient, Babylon. The entire subjection of Germany to the empire of Charlemagne, and the forced conversion of the Saxons, by whom it was chiefly inhabited, greatly extended the dominions and encreafed the power of the Pope. At the fame time, the capitularies

of

are feattered up and down in many places of the facred writings." The observation is excellent, but I am afraid the expression our of the facility interpreted, it is more naturally referred to the old dragon himself, as the prime mover of the scheme, and the inspirer of the agents. But Grotius seems rightly to understand it of the three impure spirits which were just now mentioned, and renders it, seere ut convenirent.

of that monarch were calculated to enlarge his authority, and ftrengthen his influence. Several of the fucceeding emperors did much for the exaltation of the Roman See itfelf, while the whole weight of the empire was engaged in the great interests of the church. I am not ignorant of the contentions between the popes and the emperors respecting investitures, nor of the factions of the Guelphs and Gibelines, and the terrible confequences which they produced. But thefe were only private and political struggles, for perfonal power or privilege, and did not affect the grand and general fystem. On the contrary, we find the German bishops and princes, fometimes taking the part of the pope, when the emperor was against him; and it is highly remarkable, that, notwithstanding all these contentions, the authority of the

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the pope never was exercised with a more mortifying infolence over any monarch, than over these emperors. Of this I shall only mention the following striking examples. The first is, Gregory VII's excommunicating and dethroning of the emperor Henry IV. who, when he folicited absolution from that haughty pontiff, was admitted only into the outer court of the palace where he was then upon a vifit; and there, flripped of his robes, and covered with fackcloth, he waited three days and three nights, barefooted, and fasting, in the depth of winter, before he was allowed to kifs his holinefs's feet. The other is the case of Frederick I. commonly stiled Barbarossa, who, after an unfuccessful war with the pope, was forced to make the most humiliating fubmission, not only by kiffing his feet, but by holding his stirrup

rup while he mounted his mule. At the dawn of truth in Germany, by the preaching of John Huss, when the church was in a state of distraction by three different popes appearing at once, the Emperor Sigifmund, a narrow minded and perfidious zealot, anxious to heal the schism, and at the same time to crush the doctrine of this reformer in the bud, called a general council at Constance with the consent of John XXIII. who likewife at first prefided in it. Nothing can give us a stranger view of the church at that period, than the following lift of the perfons who attended it. 'At this council,' fays a good historian, ' where Sigifmund appeared in all his glory, were present a prodigious number of cardinals, prelates, doctors; more than a hundred fovereign princes, a hundred and eighty counts, two hundred barons, and $X \times x$ twenty

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twenty-feven ambaffadors from the feveral European courts, who all vied with each other in luxury and magnificence. There were also five hundred players on instruments, and feven hundred and eighteen courtezans, who were protected by the magistracy.' At such a council, we need not be furprifed that John Huss and Jerom of Prague should be condemned to the flames. at this council, likewife, a new head of the church, Martin V. was elected, who rode in procession to the cathedral to receive the triple crown, the emperor and the elector of Brandenburgh walking before him, and leading his horse by the reins. The emperor then turned his arms against the Hussites, who fuffered much perfecution, though even this experienced and powerful prince was feveral times defeated by Zifca their general. The prodigious

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ous efforts made by the emperor Charles V. to support the interests of popery in Germany, in opposition to the reformation are known to all. But it may be proper to notice, that, even now, when fo great a part of the empire is become proteftant, by the very constitution of that great body, if a war for the interest of popery should obtain the confent of the diet, every protestant prince, however much he might remonstrate against it, would be obliged to contribute his quota both of men and money to support it.

From the general view then which we have taken of this vast bulwark of mystical Babylon, we cannot but perceive, with what evident propriety, it is represented by the river Euphrates. No other power in Europe is adequate to the dignity and greatness of the emblem; or can so effectually accomplish the purpose

CHAP. XVI. for which it is introduced. When this vial shall be poured out, the water of this great political river shall be dried up, in confequence of which, the way of the kings of the east, for deftroying myffical Babylon, shall be prepared. Who these kings of the east are, is a question to which I shall not prefume to give a decisive anfwer: Only it appears, from another part of this prophecy (a), that they are fome of the ten kings, or governments, whom antichrift had formerly subjected to his authority. It is not necessary, however, that they should be found in the eastern part of his once extensive empire, more

(°) Chap. xvii. 18. And the ten horns which thou fawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her steps, and burn her with sire. Here the meaning can only be, some of these ten kings, and not the whole, otherwise there could then be no kings of the earth, that is, of antichrist's territory, as we find there shall be, to stand up in his desence.

more than in any other; for, as the description is entirely allusive, those persons are kings of the east, in the language of this prophecy, by whom mystical Babylon shall be destroyed; as those were really so who destroyed ancient Babylon. And it is not unlikely, that those who have suffered most from her tyranny, shall be the chief instruments of her desolation (2).

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(a) Napier, contrary to all probability, interprets this vial of the Turks and Saracens coming from beyond the Euphrates, with Ottoman and his fubordinate kings of the eastern countries, to make war against the Roman Empire. The frogs he takes to be the agents of the pope, and of Mahomet, who stirred up the princes of the east against those of the west.----Jurieu interprets the vial much in the same sense; only, he confines it to the passage of the Turks into Europe, and the desolutions which they made in the pope's dominions, beginning about the year 1370, and continuing till the siege of Vienna under Charles V. in 1529.----Both Mede and Durham understand

the river Euphrates, and the drying up of its waters, of the Turkish Empire, and its fall; and, by the kings of the east, they understand the Jews, the way for whose conversion is then to be prepared. The latter conceives, that, prior to these events, the beaft, pressed with difficulties, will engage the Turk in his behalf, and that they shall both be ruined at the battle of Armageddon. But where are the Jews ever stiled in scripture the kings of the east? Mede seems sensible of this defect, and rests his argument chiefly upon its being the last vial but one, and therefore the Jews, if they are not converted now, must be found among the enemies of God under the following vial, and perish with them. But this argument is of no force, unless it could be shewn that the conversion of the Jews is particularly described in these prophecies: but this, as will afterwards appear, the apostle rather supposes, than describes; and besides, there is no fufficient reason to conclude that all the enemies of God are to be destroyed by the following vial .--- Fleming understands this vial to be poured out upon the Mahometan antichrist, whose power shall be exhausted by it. So far he agrees with Mede and Durham: But he thinks the ultimate intent of the vial is to prepare and dispose the caftern kings and kingdoms to renounce their heathenish and Mahometan errors, and to em-

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brace Christianity; and thinks the frogs are sent out among the eastern nations, to perfuade them into the belief of the Romish superstition, a scheme too absurd to be attempted, and to lend their affiftance in rooting out the faints, which paves the way for the battle of Armageddon .----Markius, after Forbes, interprets Euphrates of the various people and their riches as it were following to Rome from every quarter, and strengthening it in fuch a manner as that it cannot be deftroyed; and the drying up of that river, of their withdrawing themselves and their riches from it. But while the former expounds the way of the kings of the east to be the conversion of the Jews and Mahometans, he understands these kings to be the enemies who are to destroy Babylon, and gives the following whimfical reasons why they are stiled Kings of the East. 1st, Because God would call them from afar, (from a quarter from whence they were not expected) and, like the rays of the eastern fun, they should march very prosperously and swiftly: and, 2d, Because they were to be fent by Christ, like the sun rising from the deep, to minister to him in this work.----Vitringa gives it as his opinion, that the mystical Euphrates denotes some very powerful and populous kingdom of Europe, which has been a defence to the kingdom of the beaft. This kingdom he thinks

thinks can be no other than France. This river is to be dried up; God in his providence shall order that the strength and riches of that great kingdom shall be exhausted, so that the kings and princes of the earth shall have no further obstacle from it, in the time of that war, which is to be carried on for the cause of religion, and which fhall lay open the way for accomplishing the great work of reforming the church. By the kings of the East he understands kings enlightened with a purer gospel, and by the frogs chiefly the Jesuits. But this last part of the interpretation fact itself has confuted, and prefent appearances, fo far as we can judge from them, have rendered even the former extremely improbable; as, in order to verify it, France must again become a kingdom anxious to stand up in defence of antichrist, aitho', by reason of her exhausted strength, unable to refift the kings who shall combine to destroy him. --- I only fubjoin the interpretation of Lowman, who supposes the river Euphrates to be the Ad. riatic Sea, which is the eaftern boundary of the pope's dominions; and observes, that this vial feens to intend an invasion of these by the Turks, who are now the eastern neighbours of Italy.

It would be tedious to collect all the interpretations which have been offered of the name Armageddon, and it could afford no entertainment, ex-

cept to those who are versant in that kind of learning, to arrange the various methods of forming the compound Hebrew word, of which it is supposed to consist. Jerom's interpretation has, in part, been often mentioned by expositors, (although, as Markius justly observes, they leave us still in the dark respecting the Hebrew words of which he compounded it). He feems however to have been by no means fatisfied what was its genuine import; for he translates it in all these different ways, confurrectio tecti; five, confurrectio in priora; fed melius mons e latrunculis, five, mons globofus; expressions of a very dark and enigmatical meaning, and which probably would have been little attended to, had it not been out of respect to their learned and venerable author.

The interpretation of Drusius, which is followed by Fleming, is more easy and intelligible: he renders it הרמא בדהיו the destruction of their army. Markius renders it, שותם בינות excidium per anathema, utter destruction by a curse; but the meaning is not different from the former: it only expresses it a little more emphatically. Vitringa thinks it is compounded of and and the mountain of Megeddo, or, as he translates it, the mountain of destruction. This indeed is the most common way of sitting the Hebrew to the Greek letters; it is adopted by Lowman and Waple, but

the term is chiefly understood in allusion to a place of that name repeatedly mentioned in the Old Testament. Forbes thinks it is here alluded to in a twofold respect; to denote, 1st, The destruction of the enemies of the church, as of Jabin and Sifera, at the waters of Megeddo: 2d, That from this victory, fuch mourning of the Jews shall arife, although of a different kind, as they made formerly for the death of Josiah in the valley of Megeddo. It is eafy to fee that this groundless supposition is formed only for the purpose of that interpretation of the vial, which this author has thought proper to adopt. Upon the whole, I incline to think that the name Armageddon is chiefly introduced as a most fignificant prophetical appellation, by which the field of the battle of the great day of God Almighty shall be distinguished, on account of the complete and tremendous ruin in which antichrift and his followers shall there be involved: and, that any allusion it may have to Megeddo of old, can only be in reference to the destruction of the army of Jabin by the Israelites in the neighbourhood of that city. This may be glanced at, by way of heightening the description, in the two following respects. 1st, As it was a complete and total destruction, not a man of that great army escaped. 2d, As it seems to have been accomplished by an immediate interposition of Heaven. This is not obscurely intimated in thefe

these beautiful lines of the song of Deborah and Barak,

The ftars fought from heaven,

They fought against Sisera from their high
places;

The river Kishon swept them away, Even the river of antiquities, the river Kishon *.

And we learn from Josephus, that a tradition of this kind had been preserved among the Jews; for he speaks of a terrible tempest which beat upon the Canaanites, and so stupisted and disabled them, that they were trampled to death by the horses, and torn to pieces by their own chariots.

* Lightfoot rightly supposes that this river was famous for ancient monuments of idolatry. This alone gives a meaning to its being called a river of antiquities; and it is an awful circumstance in the punishment of these idolaters that God should have made it an instrument of their destruction.

THE POURING OUT OF THE SEVENTH VIAL.

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Ver. 17. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne, saying, It is done.

This is the last judgement which is inflicted upon antichrist's kingdom, and which terminates in the total ruin of him and his followers. Therefore the vial is represented as poured out into the air, as if the furrounding atmosphere, the medium of life, and the elements themselves, were become the instruments of their destruction; and therefore,

therefore, also, the awful voice of CHAP. the Almighty is heard, intimating, in the fhort emphatical expression. It is done, that the measures of his vengeance upon them are now completed.

Ver. 18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightenings; and there was a great earthquake, fuch as was not fince men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and fo great.

These expressions are descriptive of the presence of God, when he comes to execute the fury of his vengeance upon his enemies. The ancient prophecies are full of fimilar descriptions upon such occasions. Then a fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. Then his lightenings lighten the world, the earth also beholds and trembles. Such is the language in which they announce the fignal

CHAP XVI. fignal judgements of Heaven upon the wicked, and it is the best comment that can be given upon this passage. But it ought to be obterved, that the revolutions which shall take place, in consequence of the pouring out of this vial, shall be the most astonishing that ever the world beheld. This is intimated by the great earthquake which it produced, such as was not since men were upon the earth.

Ver. 19. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Such are the terrible effects with which this mighty earthquake was immediately followed. Antichrist's kingdom, here denoted by the great city,

city, was rent into three parts, and stood an awful monument of the judgement of the Almighty. And the cities of the nations fell, the rich communities among the various people of his dominions, which traded for his interest, were overthrown; and great Babylon, or Rome itself, came in remembrance before God, the day of vengeance, which had long feemed to tarry, was now arrived, when God was to execute upon her the fierceness of his wrath, which not only was to work her utter destruction. but in fuch a terrible manner, that, like an inflaming and intoxicating draught, it was to drive her to all the madness of despair.

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Ver. 20. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

This accounts for the horror of the situation in which she was involved; CHAP. XVI. volved; for every place of refuge, or shelter, to which she might betake herself in her extremity, was entirely removed.

Ver. 21. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

How fudden and awful the ruin which this plague must produce! and how audacious the obstinacy of these wretched victims of incensed vengeance, that the greater the judgments which they suffer, the more their iniquities and blasphemies are increased. * * * * *

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SATAN LOOSED OUT OF HIS PRISON.

CHAP. XX. 7—10.

Ver. 7. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.

The powerful restraints that had been laid upon him, during that happy period of the prosperity of the church, shall then be removed.

Ver. 8. And he shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather Zzz them CHAP. XX.

them together to battle; the number of whom is as the fund of the fea.

Immediately upon his release he shall discover his wonted enmity against the church, in stirring up the wicked nations, the instruments of his malice, by every insidious artifice, to unite their power and policy for her destruction. Of these he shall find abundance ready to adopt and execute his plan, even Gog and Magog, whose multitudes are represented as innumerable, like the sand of the sea.

Ver. 9. And they went up on the the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

We have here a view of the progress, and of the issue, of this formidable

midable expedition. They march- CHAP. ed up their army of fuch a vast extent, that it feemed to fill the whole breadth of the earth. They even compassed the camp of the faints, and the beloved city, and feem to have been just ready to make their grand affault, when they were fuddenly deftroyed by Heaven's almighty vengeance, in a manner as evident, and as awful, as if fire had come down from heaven to devour them.

Ver. 10. And the devil that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are; and shall be tormented, day and night, for ever and ever.

What a monument of the power and justice of God is here. The arch enemy himself is at last visited for all the wickedness which he has done. He is cast into the unquenchable

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able lake, where he finds fome of his chief agents before him, and he and they are tormented together, without intermission, and without end.

In this prophecy we have an account of the last effort of the great adversary against the church of Christ. His exertions upon the earth had been long restrained. He is now permitted, for a feafon, to renew them: and he instantly goes forth to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to make waragainst the saints. Who these last instruments of his malice shall be, or in what parts of the world they shall be found, is one of the most difficult of our apocalyptical inquiries. Any light which is afforded us respecting it, is too feeble to direct us through the dark extended gloom which lies

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in our wav. It has indeed been fupposed, that the Gog and Magog here described, are the same with Gog and his confederates against whom Ezekiel's prophecy (chap. xxxviii.) is directed, and that the various circumstances which are recorded in the ancient prophecy may help us to interpret this. But that the perfons alluded to in both prophecies are the fame, is an opinion that cannot eafily be maintained. I readily allow, that two or more prophecies, though they contain very different circumstances, may relate to the fame event: as one prophet may notice circumstances which are omitted by another. But when an Old and a New Testament prophet both refer to the fame event it is certainly very improbable, that the later should describe it in obscurer and more general terms than the former, who had prophefied CHAP.

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fied of it almost feven hundred years before, and should not add a single circumstance to throw further light upon it. Ezekiel, however, has decided this matter himfelf, by shewing that his prophecy relates to an event which must be long prior to that here described. For, after sinishing the account of the destruction of Gog and his multitudes, he adds, So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God, from that day and forward. They shall know that I am the Lord their God, who caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them into their own land, and have left none of them any more there, neither will I hide my face any more from them, for I have poured out my spirit upon the bouse of Israel, saith the Lord God*. Does not this lead us directly to the resettlement of the house of

^{*} Fzek, xxxix, 22, 28, 29.

of Ifrael in the land of their fathers. and by no means to the end of the millennium? Can it be imagined, that that people should not have had fufficient evidence that the Lord was their God, till after they had, not only been almost miraculously reflored to the promifed land, but had enjoyed a thousand years' uninterrupted prosperity in it? that even this should not satisfy them, till they had witneffed the complete destruction of Gog and Magog, the last enemies of the church on earth? Besides, upon this interpretation, the affurance that they fhould continue in the divine favour, and be no more cast off, would be unneceffary, as the confummation of all things must then be at hand. But, not to dwell longer on arguments of this kind, how is it possible to give a meaning to these, and similar expressions in the prophecy, I

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will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes †, if we refer it to that period, when there shall be no heathen but Gog himself and his multitudes; and when they shall all perish in one common destruction?

Notwithstanding this, it is still maintained, that the leading circumstances of the fituation of the Ifraelites, at the time when Gog shall invade them, as reprefented by Ezekiel, are fuch as can accord only with the end of the millennium. They are represented as rich, as living in fecurity, and as having loft the knowledge of the art of war, circumstances which are supposed to indicate the lapfe of a long period of profperity and peace. But let it be obferved, that no reasoning can be more

⁺ Ezek, xxxviii. 16. See also v. 23.

more fallacious than drawing conclusions from what takes place in the ordinary course of things, to what may be expected under an extraordinary, and almost miraculous, dispensation. Who will presume to affert, that He who makes the wilderness a fruitful field, and who has the treasures of the world at his difpofal, cannot foon blefs his people with plenty in their new fituation? Let us not forget what happened to their fathers in their early history. Unlikely as it was that they should be possessed of wealth, when they were groaning under their fervitude in Egypt; yet, by the time when they left that kingdom, their property was of magnitude fufficient to become a fpur to the vengeance of their oppressors; fo that prompted by avarice itself, The enemy faid, I will purfue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. I find no evi-A A dence

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dence from prophecy that at the invafion of Gog, they are represented as having loft the art of war, but only that they did not exercise it. And with respect to their living in fecurity, and without apprehension of any hostile attack, it is enough to observe, that, their preservation in that happy land, will probably be fo much under the immediate protection of Heaven, that it will require little of those means of detence, on which the states and governments of this world have hitherto fo greatly depended. Let me only further observe, that, so far as this fecurity is an argument upon the point before us, it concludes more for the beginning than for the end of the millennium; for then the church must feel apprehension, if any external circumstances can occasion it, as they must have learned clearly from this prophecy in the

the Revelation, that when the thou- CHAP. fand years were expired, both Gog and Magog, with an immense multitude of people, were to come up against them. It appears then, that these prophecies relate to two very different events; and I have been at more pains to fet this matter in a just and fatisfying light, because it is necessary to the interpretation which I am now to offer.

The first of these prophecies feems here to be confidered as a type or figure of the other; and the attempt of the last enemies of the church on earth, feems to be fet forth in allusion to that of the last enemies of the flock of Israel as a distinct and separate people. At the fame time, it ought to be observed. that we are under particular difadvantage in the interpretation of this concluding prophecy, because even that

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that which is the type of it is not yet realized.

If we take up the appellation in the literal fense, it will not be very difficult to determine where the country of Gog is to be found. The learned Bochart has thewn with great probability, that it lies on the west side of the Caspian Sea; of this the very names of the places in that neighbourhood are a confiderable prefumption; fuch as Gogarene, for instance, and Caucasus, which has no very remote affinity to Goghausen, the strong hold of Gog; though it is not eafy to reconcile this with the Geography of John's prophecy, which places Gog and Magog in the four quarters of the earth. But the difficulties in the literal fense are indeed infurmountable, and have thrown commentators into perplexity and contradiction. How can we suppose, in the ffrict

strict and proper meaning of the terms, that an army of fuch prodigious extent as to fill the breadth of the earth, should march upon that breadth which must be occupied by the church, and that too, only in order to compass the camp of the faints, while in the mean time they must be invading it; that they should actually compass that camp, though its boundaries were spread over Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; that they should obey the orders of one or two leaders, which they could not hear, and make one united attack in their different quarters, though the distance shall be so immense, they must be absolute strangers to each other's motions. This is a supposition, the very idea of which not only mocks probability, but baffles all conception. We must therefore relinquish the literal fense of this prophecy that we may difcover

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discover its mystical and genuine import. With this view I conceive it is by no means necessary, to go to the extremities of the world among rude and barbarous nations, (who, it is thought, thall then be pushed to its most distant corners, in search of those enemies of the church who are here described. They shall then be found, if I mistake not, settled in all the various territories where the churchshall be established; and, what may feem strangest of all, they shall migrate to these settlements even from the bosom of the church itfelf. What has been already obferved concerning the flate of things in the the time of the millennium, will ferve greatly to illustrate this curious point. There we have feen, that, by a wonderful effusion of the Spirit from on high, Christianity fhall beat down all opposition before it, and shall extend its heavenly influence

influence over all the earth. There we have likewife feen, what admirable order, what exalted purity, and what an ardent spirit of piety, and devotion, shall every where prevail. An evil feed notwithstanding, and a root of bitterness, we have reason to believe, shall still remain. Thefe, partly awed by the wonderful interpolitions of Providence, and partly from other causes, shall, for a time, appear in concord and amity with the faints, and perhaps assume fomething of the femblance of their holy and elevated temper. But, as their heart is all the while unchanged, the native enmity will still remain, and will at length discover itself, in a deep dislike to a flate of things where they can find no gratification, and in an impatience of the restraints under which they are held. The fury of their pent-up evil propenfities will

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last burst forth with violence. Their diforders will become apparent. They shall be cast out from the communion of Christians; and, finding themselves the objects of general contempt and aversion, they will naturally feek to withdraw from a fociety the enjoyments of which they can never relish, and the regulations of which they cannot endure. They shall probably find a retreat at some corner of that church to which they belonged. For, though the church in general shall be in perfect harmony, under the fame doctrine and under the fame order; yet its different departments will admit of fome diffinctions, from their natural fituation, and from the people of which they confist. Tehre shall be, for instance, not only the distinction of the Jewish and Gentile churches, but likewife, we may prefume the churches

of Britain and Ireland, of Germany, Tartary, and Greece; the American and African churches, through all their extensive divisions, and so of other parts of the world. In all these places, we may reasonably fuppose, that those who are enemies to the fpirit and power of religion will find fome corners for retreat. There they shall be joined from time to time, by those of a similar character, as they fpring up in the countries to which they belong. At length, by the accessions they shall have received, and by their own progreffive increase, they shall become confiderable bodies of people; each having laws and regulations peculiar to itself. Thus, in a manner perfectly natural and probable, infidel and wicked nations shall grow up upon the borders of the churches, perhaps in all the different countries of the world.

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These, by the end of the millennium, will be great and powerful, their borders gradually extending, as those of the churches are contracted; and, taken all together, their numbers may be faid to be like the fand of the fea. They shall however, be reftrained from hurting the faints; nor shall dare to make any attempt against them during the whole of that period. But when Satan shall be permitted to go forth and infligate their malice, then shall they form their schemes of conquest and devastation: their preparations will be quickened; their forces, through extensive countries will be combined; they shall correspond with one another in their most distant settlements, in order to make their feveral affaults against the faints at the fame time. The principal attempt will probably be made upon their richest territory and their most

most flourishing state, or where they are most strongly fortified by nature itself, called in this prophecy the camp of the faints, and the beloved city. By striking a decisive blow against them there, they may hope more easily to disperse and exterminate them in other places, as well as to share a speedy and valuable booty But the iffue will be their own fignal and total destruction, and that too, in an immediate and awful manner from heaven ittelt: the faints being wonderfully delivered, and having nothing to do but to fland fill and fee the falvation of God.

But it will be asked, with what propriety are these enemies distinguished by the apellations of Gog and Magog, when they seem to be made up of all the different people of the world, and are actually represented as dwelling in the four quarters

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quarters of the earth? This queftion is unanswerable upon the literal interpretation; but in the prophetical fense it admits of an easy folution. Nothing is more common in prophecy, than to call one thing by the name of another to which it bears a firiking refemblance. Examples of this will occur fo readily to every one who is acquainted with that species of writing, that it is almost unnecesfary to mention them. Papal Rome, for inflance, is called in these prophecies, not only Babylon, but likewife Egypt*, because of its idolatry, and of its being a cruel oppresfor and perfecutor of the people of God: and Isaiah represents some of the last enemies of the church by Edom, one of her ancient enemies, and calls them by that name †. Up-

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⁻ Rev. xi. 9. + Isaiah lxiii 3.

on this fame principle, John was di- CHAP. rected to proceed in the paffage before us. It had been prophefied, before, that Gog in the land of Magog, was to be the last enemy of the Jews as a distinct people; that he was to make his attack upon them immediately before the commencement of the millennium. How natural was it then to describe the last enemies of the church in general, after that long period of peace and prosperity had elapsed, by the appellations which belonged to those who had last preceded them. And when we consider the similarity of their character, and the corresponding greatness of their combined forces, the description is at once most fignificant and instructive. Much light no doubt will be thrown upon this prophecy, when that which is its type, or emblem, shall be realized. In the mean time it helps

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helps the weakness of our conceptions to view it in connection with it.

Such then is the evidence for the fenfe which I have given of this difficult prophecy, fo far as any thing can be called evidence upon fo obfcure a fubject. The improbabilities of former interpretations are avoided; we fee a just and eafy application of the very appellations which are here made use of, and an important reason for adopting them; and every circumstance, so far as we have gone, exactly suits the description.

Let me only further observe, in order to make the coincidence complete, that Gog and Magog will still be found in the four quarters of the earth, as the prophet describes them, even in the strict and literal sense of the expression; and that not only with respect

to the church in general, but likewife with respect to all the departments of which it is compofed. I fuspect however, that this is not the meaning of the exprefssion here, but that it is used in the fense of every where, over the wide extent of the earth, as we find Mark applying the equivalent expression, "Then shall he fend his angels, and gather together his elect" from the four winds*; undoubtedly meaning, wherever they are scattered over the face of the whole earth. In likemanner God fpeaks concerning Flam, I will fcatter Elam towards the four winds, which he explains by faying, and there shall be no nation where the outcasts of Elam shall not come †. Finally, when these enemies are faid to go upon the breadth of the earth, the prophet intimates, that when they are about to put their grand destroying scheme into

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^{*} Mark xiii. 27. + Jer. xlix. 36.

into execution, they shall be found all in active preparation, in various nations, marching to and fro, joining their different armies in every country, over the whole breadth of the earth (a).

I cannot

(a) Upon this prophecy the great Napier has itrangely fancied, that the looing of Satan took place in the year 1300, in the time of Boniface VIII. that he and Ottoman the Great are the Gog and Magog that are here spoken of, and that they and their fuccesfors were, and shall be stirred up by Satan, to the most terrible wars against one another, with immense and innumerable armies, till they be deftroyed. - Mede supposes Gog and Magog to come from those Gentile nations who had escaped the deluge of fire at the first refurrection; and particularly, that they denote the American tribes both in the fouth and north part of that continent, among whom the gospel has never foread, and who, he thinks, shall transport themfelves over the ocean and furround our world. - Waple understands these enemies, of the rest of the dead, in the preceding prophecy, raifed to a state of condemnation, and stirred up by Satan to attack the camp of the faints on earth; and observes

I cannot quit this fubject with- CHAP. out requesting the reader's indulgence while I offer fome observa-

4 C tions

observes that Ezekiel calls them the multitude, or nations, of the dead. It is easy to see that these extraordinary fancies are the offspring of particular schemes of interpretation, to which they must be adapted, and for which they were made.—Vitringa takes up the appellations much in the literal fense, and understands them of the Seva thians, or Tartars properly speaking, and those who, from fimilarity of religion or manners, might join them from other parts of the world. He thinks the millennery church will be confined either to Europe alone, or, at most, will extend only to some of the neighbouring parts of Asia and Africa; this is what he understands by the breadth of the earth, as it contains the best situated and most cultivated parts of the world: he thinks the expression is used in this sense in scripture, and refers to Hab. i. 6. though without fufficient reason to support it. From the various corners in which they are shut up, these enemies of the church, he thinks, shall, at the determined period, burst forth upon her, that the judgements of God shall overtake and destroy them, after which,

CHAP-XX. tions upon the Gog of Ezekiel, in order, if possible to discover the grand event to which that prophecy is pointed. I hope it is unnecessary to add any further reasons to shew, that it relates to a very different period, and embraces a quite different object, from the prophecy we have

which, he supposes, the church shall extend her wings over all the earth, How arbitrary these conjectures are I leave it to every reader to confider. Not to mention, that the church, in all probability, shall be both very extensive and populous upon the American continent, of which he takes no notice; the supposition of a second period of still higher improvement and much greater enlargement to the church after the glorious millennium shall have elapsed, is an idea of which none of the prophets feem to have had any discovery .- Finally, Forbes, Durham, Jurieu, Markius, Lowman, and Newton, determine little concerning the nations here referred to, but only confider them in general as the last enemies of the church: both Jurieu and Newton confeffing that who they shall be they cannot pretend to fay with any degree of certainty.

now been furveying. It has indeed been attempted to reduce us to a dilemma in this inquiry. The war of Ezekiel's Gog, it is faid, must either be that of John's Gog and Magog, or else it must be the battle of Armageddon; because the revelation takes no notice of any intermediate one: but it cannot be the battle of Armageddon, because there, it is alledged, the Jews shall be the aggreffors, and therefore it must be that last attempt against the church which John describes. That the Jews are to be the aggreffors at the battle of Armageddon, or indeed that they are to be there at all, I do not fee any fatisfying evidence, either in Rev. xix. 11. which is brought to prove it; or in any part of the prophetic writings. I have shewn fo fully already the abfurdity of imagining that the people of God shall go forth with the sword to accomplish

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complish the prophecies, and to revenge themselves of their enemies, that it is unnecessary to insist further upon it. And with respect to the other part of the argument, it is certainly a too hasty conclusion, that there shall be no warlike operation between the battle of Armageddon, and the appearance of Gog and Magog, because nothing of this kind is mentioned by John in the Revelation. This last of the prophets is fo much taken up with the Romish antichrist in the second part of his prophecy, that he pays fcarcely any regard to what is passing in other parts of the world; but, after finishing the description of his signal ruin, proceeds immediately to the happy flate of the millennium church. But it is evident that other and great revolutions must take place before the commencement of that happy period. These however,

as they are connected with the re- CHAP. thoration of the Jews to the land of their fathers, are left to be gathered from the intimations which the Old Testament prophets have given respecting them.

I conceive then, that Ezekiel, in the war of Gog, prophecies the fall of fuperstition and tyranny in the east, in like manner as John has given an account of the battle of Armageddon in the west. This will be occasioned by the resettlement of the Jews in their ancient territory. But the great Turkish power must be broken before that event; and the land emptied of its inhabitants for their reception. Their migrations to that land will occasion the first alarm to the various potentates which furround it. Vast bodies of them shall pass through Gomer and Togarma of the north quarters, probably the whole of those who are fcattered

fcattered over the various countries of Europe. Great numbers shall pass through Persia, chiefly those perhaps that are of the house of Israel: and a vast concourse of them, we may fuppose, shall meet on the fouth extremity of Judea, from Asia on the east, and from Egypt and Lybia on the west. The neighbouring powers however, benumbed with conflernation at fo strange a fight, and under the energy of a divine restraint, shall not interrupt their progrefs. There they shall live under a government of their own, constructed, we may be affured, upon principles the most favourable to human happinefs. Under its equitable laws and benignant institutions, and in the habitual exercife of fobriety, industry and economy, but above all, by the bleffing of God attending them, the people shall enjoy every external comfort, and and shall prosper and multiply apace. But they shall be objects of jealoufy and vengeance to wicked princes, and to the dark votaries of fuperstition, who will unite their forces to exterminate a people whom they will confider as highly dangerous to tolerate. The prime instigator and chief conductor of this enterprife is distinguished by the name of Gog, which, I am inclined to think, is only a borrowed appellation, under which fome remains of the broken Turkish power is alluded to. The reason of this conjecture is, because this same Gog is introduced exciting those who had been, and still continued. under the influence of his extensive superstition, and engaging them in his defign. It is probable then that in this ancient prophecy, transported beyond the existence of that once great and terrible empire, we contemplate

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template him who was its last head. who when the government was broken to pieces, being driven from his imperial city, was forced to take refuge with his shattered army among the mountains on the west fide of the Caspian Sea. There, we may suppose, supported by his Tartar auxiliaries, which are very numerous, he will endeavour to establish the remains of his power and greatness; and, securing the attachment of his eastern provinces, and fortifying their boundaries, he may ftill be a very confiderable independent prince; and, what is one of his specific characters, he will literally be prince of Mesheck and Tubal, these being part of the provinces which he shall still retain. a fufficient reason for his being prophetically called Gog, that he proceeded originally from his country. But I suspect it is intended likewise, for

for an obscure intimation, that he shall then be found actually residing upon his border, and it is a good reason for his being said to be influenced by the love of spoil, though acting chiefly from a different motive, that the people of that country have been long accustomed to plunder. Feeling himself so far recovered, and indulging a fecret hope that he may yet be able to reconquer fome of the countries which he had loft, he will naturally avail himself of the jealousy which will be entertained of the new and prosperous settlement of the Jews, and will be active in perfuading the neighbouring governments to join in one grand and decifive enterprife against them. He shall succeed in his defign. Great and extensive shall the combination be. It shall consist of Lybians, Ethiopians, or

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befides

Egyptians, Arabians, and Perfians,

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befides the multitudes which Gog shall bring forward. All these, blended by the fame fuperstition, and filled with the fame enmity against Jews and Christians, shall be fit instruments for the purposes of their leaders; and, we learn from the prophecy, that Gog himfelf, at the head of his northern legions, who is certainly most interested in the fuccess of the expedition, shall take the chief command. How far they shall penetrate into the Jewish territory, or what ravages they shall commit, we cannot determine; but it feems as if they should spread confiderably over the mountains of Ifrael *, and be permitted to pillage the people †, though we read of none of them perishing by their hand. They feem miraculously to be restrained from hurting their persons t, the weapons which they

point

^{*} Ezek, xxxviii. 21, + Ezek, xxxix. 10. ‡ Ez. xxxix. 3.

point against them falling out of CHAP. their hands; till, at length, that great but motley army, fretted with difappointment, and quarrelling perhaps about the spoil, or from national differences entering in among them, turn their fwords against one another, and are finally destroyed in a most terrible manner by the visible judgements of Heaven. The effect of these extraordinary judgements will be very great. They will strike the unenlightened people with confernation and awe, and make them know and turn unto the Lord; for thus fays God, I will fet my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgement that I have executed, and my hand that I bave laid upon them. The people likewife, for whom this wonderful interposition shall be made, will be regarded with high estimation: their policy

policy will be admired; and the favour of Heaven fo remarkably attending them, will add to the native evidence of gospel truth which they shall then profess: Their civil and religious principles therefore shall have a rapid and extensive fpread, and eastern tyranny and fuperstition shall fly before them over all those vast regions where they have fo long prevailed. Such are the happy and grand effects which shall be occasioned by the wonderful conduct of Providence towards that ancient people. Well then may we fay, with the apostle Paul, "If the fall of them was the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness! And if the casting of them away be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead!"

(581)

VISION OF THE DEAD STANDING BEFORE GOD

TO JUDGEMENT.

Ver. 11,--15.

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Ver. 11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven sled away; and there was found no place for them.

The throne which the apostle beheld, we have reason to believe, was of a bright and shining whiteness, as the expression frequently denotes, like the cloud of glory in the tabernacle. The person who sat upon it could be no other than

his

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his divine Master himself, as the scripture repeatedly testifies, and the greatness of his majesty, is very powerfully described by the earth and the heaven flying away at his presence, so that they could not be found any more (a).

Then

(a) I see no propriety in having recourse here to a mystical fense of this sublime and magnificent description, as if only the present worldly œconomy were represented as having fled away from before the Judge. This is fufficiently intimated by the judgement itself, which must conclude that occonomy; and besides it is evident, that it can have no longer any existence, when the world itself, to which it belonged, has passed away. This the apostle beheld in vision; and, in the fense in which it is plainly to be understood, we need not trouble ourfelves in reconciling it with other passages of scripture, as it is only a visionary movement to ftrike the mind with inftant veneration, and to put it in a proper posture for contemplating with holy awe the folemn and interesting scene which ensues. One cannot help being furprifed then to find the learned Vitringa blaming the dulness of his genius for not having difcovered a meaning which the very description itfelf entirely superfedes.

Then the judgement did fit, the fo- CHAP. lemnity and the justice of which, together with its awful iffue, the following verses most strikingly delineate.



Ver. 12. And I faw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Here we see persons of every rank and condition in life reprefented as standing before the Judge. His divine character is afferted; He is called God; and indeed the office which he fustains demonstrates that character, as nothing less than divine and infinite perfection is neceffary to discharge it. The judgement is reprefented as unerringly righteous;

righteous; in allusion to the most perfect forms of judicature with which we are acquainted, under the notion of books, in which the law of God and the actions of every man are supposed to be written. Thefe books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, in which the names of the redeemed are understood to be registered, and their conversion and spiritual progrefs to be marked; and out of these books, upon the furest principles of equity and truth, the dead were judged according to their works, a).

Ver.

(2) I understand not any of these books to be the book of conscience as commentators have supposed. Conscience is more properly the witness, who bears testimony to the truth of the accusation, and obliges the the sinner to acknowledge the justice of the charge. And with respect to the saints, their justification proceeds upon the merits of the Saviour being reckoned to their accounts.

Ver. 13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to their works.

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Though the earth and the heaven, in this vision, fled away at the prefence of the Lord, yet the dead, it appears, were previously yielded up, whether they had perished by fea, or had died upon land, and were buried; all were delivered up, and left, with the living who remained, standing before God. Their flation is reprefented as aerial, and awful. The earth and these visible heavens in this vision being removed, and nothing appearing through the immense expanse but the world of happiness and glory above and the unquenchable devouring lake below. Death and hell, meaning the grave(2),

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⁽a) The word which is here translated *hell*, has been commonly understood to fignify the separate



who had feized and retained men under their dark dominion for fo many ages, are here elegantly perfonified

state both of good and bad men between death and the refurrection: but I do not find it fo ufed by the inspired writers. The truth is it is never used in a good, but always in a bad sense in scripture. The only passage in which it seems to refer to the invisible world, is Luke xvi 23, where it is evidently taken in a bad fense, for the rich man in hell "lift up his eyes being in torments." But it is commonly used to fignify the grave. Thus Acts ii. 27. Thou wilt not leave my foul in hell, the only meaning of which is, as the argument clearly determines, Thou wilt not leave my dead body in the grave, a fenfe fo indifputable, that the learned Beza thought himself justified in giving it even as a translation in his first edition of the New Testament, though afterwards he altered it, upon the principle of its deviating too much from the strict interpretation of the terms. And Rev vi-8. when death is riding forth in his conquests, hell, or the grave, is beautifully represented as following after him, like a devouring monster, to swallow up those whom he had killed. The expresfion has the fame meaning in those places where death and hell are mentioned together, and even in that paffage where it is faid "that the gates of hell

fonified, and introduced refigning all their conquests; after which they are cast, along with the other enemies of the people of God, into the lake of fire, which is the second death: thereby significantly intimating that they should never be able to hurt them any more. It is added,

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Ver. 14. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of sire.

Hence we learn, that there is no possible way in which a sinner can escape that tremendous sentence, but in being redeemed unto Gd by the blood of the Lamb; and, in evidence of this, his name being found in the book of life. Every other person, whatever hope he might

hell shall not prevail against the church," the most probable meaning is, that the church should still endure, notwithstanding her persecutions; the all-devouring jaws of the grave itself not being arble to destroy her.



might formerly have entertained of mercy, having nothing then to look for but the lake of fire.

This is one of the most folemn and affecting representations of the last and general judgement that is any where to be met with. It teaches us, that it is to be a real judgement, which some have denied (b), for the books were opened, and

(b) Dr. M'Night feems to think that the characters of the righteous and the wicked shall be difcriminated at the general judgment, not by any formal inquiry, but only by the kind of body in which each shall appear; the righteous being raifed with glorious bodies, but the wicked, as he thinks, with flethly, mortal, and corruptible bodies, like those in which they died, and no change being to pass on the bodies of such of them as shall be found alive upon the earth, at the coming of Christ; whence he concludes, that the whole process of the judgement will be completed at once. But he keems not to have confidered that there are different degrees of charactors both among the rightcous and the wicked, for which his hypothesis makes no provision; and

and a real discovery was made of CHAP. the characters and conduct which they contained. It teaches us also that it shall be a most strict and impartial judgement; for every man was judged according to his works; and that, not in kind only, but also in meafure or degree. Finally, it teaches us, that none shall escape that univerfal judgement; the great shall not be exempted, nor the small overlooked; and there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can conceal themselves. In vain should they then cry to the rocks and to the mountains to fall on them and cover them, for both the earth and the heaven, according to this vision. are fled away, and all things are naked

his supposition, that the wicked shall be raised with bodies like to those in which they died, would often reverse the distinctions of character among them, and make some of the most wicked to appear less so than others who had made a much smaller progress in sin than they.

naked and opened unto him with whom we have to do. Seeing then that these things are so, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?"

But though I have not a doubt that this vision relates to the last and general judgement, and therefore have fo applied it in the interpretation, yet I conceive it is introduced in this prophecy, chiefly in respect of the enemies of God and of his people, and particularly, in respect of those who were the abettors or supporters, rather than the original inventors of their schemes of wickedness, in order to manifest beforehand their tremendous and everlafting doom. This feems perfectly in the train and spirit of the preceding predictions. The apostle had already fet forth the temporal judgements in which these enemies had awfully

awfully perished: he had likewise CHAP shewn us the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire; and, last of all, he had shewn us the devil himself cast in beside them: but neither the remnant that were flain by the fword of him that fat upon the horse*, nor the multitudes whom the devil had deceived †, have been exhibited in their everlasting condition till this vision, where they are made to fland before God at the judgement, and are condemned to the fame place of torment. This is the more remarkable, as no judgement is in these visions represented to be held upon the beaft, or the false prophet, or upon Satan the great deceiver; their characters being fo notorious that it feems considered as unnecessary. But as many of the rest have been drawn in occasionally upon principles of worldly policy of a more general

^{*} Rev. xix.

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neral nature, and whose characters do not appear till they are fully investigated, therefore they are here brought forward, and we may confider along with them all the concealed and half covered enemies of God, both fmall and great, in every age. Their characters are laid open, and they are thrust down to the fame agonizing lake, in the terrible regions of everlasting woe. It is a further confirmation of the fense which I have offered, that though the faints are reprefented to be present at the judgement, yet it feems not to be the defign of this vision to fer before us their final condition; and therefore we read nothing of their fentence, but only of their exemption from punishment, in consequence of their names being written in the Lamb's book of life.











